THE SAFEST CARS TO DRIVE

LONG-COVID RECOVERY GUIDE

SHOULD YOU BUY A USED PHONE? P. 10

CR Consumer Reports®

OCTOBER 2022

RATINGS & REVIEWS

- Small Trucks
- Interior Paints
- Laptops
- Coffee Makers
- Toasters

WATCH GREAT TV FOR LESS

Secrets for saving big on streaming services like Netflix and Hulu, cutting the cord on cable, and seeing your favorite shows for free

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hulu

pluto tv

prime video

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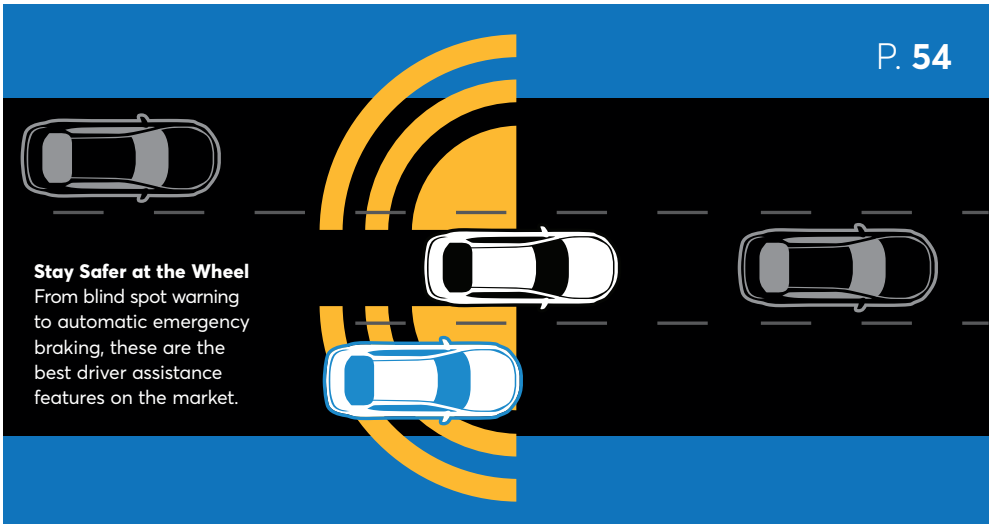
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ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS
Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1936 that works side by side with consumers to create a safe, fair, and transparent marketplace. To achieve our mission, we test thousands of products and services in our labs each year and survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising.

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Harnessing Our Power

CR MEMBERS LIKE you understand the importance of being aware and informed consumers. But today, there's actually more of a burden on all of us to uncover the hidden threats in the marketplace, from misuse of our personal data to products endangering our lives and the planet. In my upcoming book, "Buyer Aware: Harnessing Our Consumer Power for a Safe, Fair, and Transparent Marketplace," we offer the trusted advice you've come to expect from CR and show how each of us can be a force in creating a marketplace that puts people first.

In this issue of Consumer Reports, I share an excerpt about the heartbreaking deaths of babies due to inclined sleepers, which shouldn't have been on store shelves in the first place. You'll learn how my incredible CR colleagues–to whom this book is dedicated–raised the alarm and fought for nationwide change, thus saving countless lives.

This is just one of the stories we tell in our playbook for consumer power. As a valued member of the CR community, I hope you'll spread the word and encourage others to preorder "Buyer Aware" today at **BuyerAware.CR.org**. You can also sign up on this website for news and information on how to take action on the issues that have an impact on your life. All book proceeds will help CR's work in empowering consumers everywhere.

Together, we can create a marketplace that is fair and just for all.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
Follow me on Twitter
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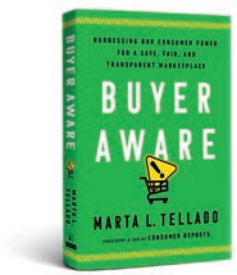

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PHOTO: VICTORIA WILL

Making Poultry Safer to Eat

There is simply too much dangerous salmonella in the poultry we eat. Almost 1.35 million people get sick from the bacteria every year, and about a fifth of those cases come from eating chicken or turkey. The reasons are fairly well-known. One is the crowded and dirty conditions in which chickens are often raised. Another is that the Department of Agriculture actually allows poultry producers to sell meat that may be contaminated with the bacteria.

That's right: While poultry producers must routinely test for salmonella, up to 9.8 percent of whole chickens, 15.4 percent of chicken parts, and 25 percent of the ground chicken they test may contain the bacteria. Even at higher amounts, the USDA doesn't stop the plant from selling meat; it just issues a warning.

To investigate the danger of this regulatory gap, CR recently tested ground meat (which is especially likely to be contaminated with bacteria) that we purchased at stores around the U.S. We found an extremely dangerous strain of E. coli in one sample of ground beef—triggering a large recall—as well as salmonella in 23 of the 75 ground chicken samples. Most of the salmonella detected was one of three strains that pose particular threats to human health, and all were resistant to at least one antibiotic.

After we published that report, the USDA announced a plan to no longer allow salmonella in frozen, raw breaded chicken products, a step forward. But CR thinks the USDA can do more, by reducing the amount of salmonella allowed in all chicken and by focusing on dangerous strains. Join us by signing our petition at **CR.org/cleanchicken**. For cooking safety tips, go to **CR.org/cleankitchen**.

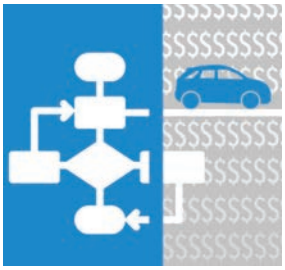
1.35 MILLION

Americans are sickened by salmonella each year.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CONSUMING SUSTAINABLY

Consumers currently have little visibility into companies' greenhouse gas emissions and other climate impacts. So CR supports a rule proposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission that would require many companies to make climate-related disclosures. While that's a positive development, CR believes the rule should be made even stronger, by requiring all companies to disclose so-called scope 3 emissions, which include those from transportation and shipping and can make up the majority of the greenhouse gas emissions for some businesses.



Fighting for Fair Insurance

WHAT'S AT STAKE

With consumer goods, if a price seems unfair you can just choose not to buy the product. Not so with auto insurance, which drivers are required to have in almost every state.

That makes it especially troubling that car insurance prices are often calculated unfairly. Specifically, CR has found that they are often tied to nondriving factors such as education level, home ownership, and credit score. In New York, for example, CR found that someone with a clean driving record but poor credit paid, on average, $1,759 per year more than drivers with excellent credit.

Among other problems, nondriving factors can sometimes be proxies for race or ethnicity, and using them can compound the economic effects of structural racism and discrimination.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR has long fought to ensure that auto insurance pricing be based only on driving factors. Three CR investigations–in 2015, 2017, and 2021–exposed companies that deviated from that principle. And in 2017 we helped persuade New York to ban the use of education and job status in car insurance pricing, unless insurers could prove they're not unfairly discriminatory.

Now CR is supporting legislation in New Jersey and New York that would ban such practices more broadly and require more transparency into pricing formulas to make sure they don't contain built-in biases.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you believe you're being overcharged for auto insurance based on nondriving factors, share your story with us at **CR.org/carstory**.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RITTER

IMPORTANT ADVICE FOR CAR BUYERS P. 54
AIR CONDITIONERS: KEEP COOL—SPEND LESS
TOP-RATED INSECT REPELLENTS
CR Consumer Reports
IS OUR MEAT SAFE TO EAT?
We tested ground meat from across the U.S. and found bacteria that can make you sick. Here's what to do before you grill your next burger.

Our August 2022 article **"Is Our Meat Safe to Eat?"** revealed that CR's tests found dangerous bacteria in ground chicken and beef–and offered strategies for safer meat prep and cooking. Our readers shared their own thoughts. To add your voice, go to **CR.org/safemeat.**

IN THE ARTICLE, you advise "Don't rinse raw meat." But what should I do with the "juice" from the packaging? Putting the packaging and juice in the trash has the potential for leaky trash bags. Putting the packaging inside a plastic bag [and then in the trash] just increases the plastic in our waste stream.
–Wayne Hall, Colchester, VT

EDITOR'S NOTE *CR's food safety experts don't recommend rinsing meat because it can spread droplets of bacteria (if present) in and around your sink from the water splashing off the meat. But you have more control over where the juices in the packaging go. Carefully pour them directly into the drain, and then clean the sink and drain with a few drops of dish detergent and hot water. Put the packaging in the trash. Finally, wash your hands well.*

AS A RETIRED registered dietitian, I noticed two important points your article omitted that would make eating ground meat safer. First, purchase grass-fed ground meat, and second, purchase ground meat that is irradiated. The USDA seriously missed the mark when it did little education to correct the misinformation on irradiation, which destroys harmful bacteria and is safe.
–Marilyn E. Jess, Bennington, VT

EDITOR'S NOTE *CR's ground beef testing in 2015 found similar rates of salmonella in conventional, grass-fed, and organic meat, although E. coli was more commonly found in conventional beef. Our current tests included pork and poultry (grass-fed isn't an option for those), and we once again found similar rates of bacteria in conventional and organically raised ground meat. With regard to irradiation, the Food and Drug Administration says it eliminates bacteria and pathogens in meat without affecting the flavor. But you would still need to handle the meat safely and cook ground chicken to 165° F and ground beef or pork to 160° F.*

WRITE

Go to CR.org/lettertoeditor to share your comments for publication.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

I LIKED YOUR August article "The Good News about EVs." I am considering getting an EV and want to charge it at home. Something people need to consider is a home load analysis to see if the electrical panel installed is adequately sized to handle the additional load. This adds to the installation cost.
–Jeffrey Mayer, Nashua, NH

EDITOR'S NOTE *We recommend hiring a professional electrician to inspect your circuit panel before buying an EV. As with any car purchase, you want to get a handle on all of the expenses before committing, and with an EV, you need to ensure that you can safely install a wall-mounted 240-volt charging unit. If your electrical panel can't handle one, or it's too costly, a plug-in hybrid may be a better choice because it can be recharged via 110 volts overnight more easily.*

IF EVS ARE a simpler design and have fewer [moving] parts, why do they cost more than complex gas-powered vehicles? And why doesn't the simpler design translate to the highest reliability ratings?
–John Kosa, Minneapolis

EDITOR'S NOTE *The cost of an EV's lithium-ion battery is the biggest factor. According to the Institute for Energy Research, the average cost for each kWh of battery capacity is about $160. That means that for an*

EV with an 80-kWh battery, the battery alone costs $12,800. The EV revolution is relatively new, with automakers investing heavily in new technologies and manufacturing facilities. In time, those costs will be spread over more models and should go down. In terms of reliability, most trouble spots we see in our Annual Surveys are attributable to infotainment systems and other ancillary items rather than to EV powertrains.

YOU DID NOT address the hazards associated with being involved in a crash while in an EV. As a firefighter and an ASE Master Auto Technician, I have knowledge of many crashes where batteries became damaged, shorted out, and caught fire. When a conventional automobile is fully engulfed in fire, flames can be extinguished with 1,000 gallons of water or less, whereas an EV requires thousands of gallons. Has the insurance industry tested these vehicles for collisions in the battery storage areas from side impacts?
–Paul Hoster, Marmora, NJ

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The Consumer Reports 2022 Annual Meeting will be held online on the evening of Oct. 19, 2022. If you're a paid member of CR, please go to **CR.org/annualmeeting** for registration information. And watch your email for an electronic ballot to vote on the current CR Board of Directors slate. If you haven't provided your email address, you can do so by calling us at 800-333-0663 or by going to **CR.org/myaccount.**

EDITOR'S NOTE *EVs are routinely tested in front and side impact tests by the insurance industry and the government. Fires in electric vehicles are less common than they are with regular gasoline vehicles, in part because there are fewer of them on the road. But damage to the lithium-ion batteries in an EV risks thermal runaway (an uncontrolled chemical reaction that can lead to temperatures soaring past 1,000° F in less than a second), creating a challenge for first responders and towing companies. Ongoing training for emergency service workers, evolving battery technology, and continued engineering progress promise to make EVs even safer in the years ahead.*

HEAT SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

WHILE "CR'S ULTIMATE Heat Survival Guide" in the August issue did contain some helpful information, it incorrectly suggested checking when your attic insulation was last replaced. Most insulation will never need replacing. If there is damage from a storm that has wet the attic, then removal would typically be needed, [but otherwise] insulation does not wear out.
–Rob Kinsey, Sturgis, MI

EDITOR'S NOTE *Insulation does have a long life. According to the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors, many kinds of insulation can last up to 100 years or more. As you mention, when insulation has become wet and moldy, it should be replaced. Another reason for replacing it would be after a rodent infestation. So it's worth inspecting your home's insulation for damage. Also, many U.S. homes–90 percent, according to the government's Energy Star program–have insufficient insulation. Adding more may improve energy efficiency.*

JOIN THE CR BOARD

Consumer Reports is seeking dynamic, dedicated candidates with a desire to advance our mission and improve the lives of consumers by serving on our Board of Directors. Ideal candidates will bring creativity, diversity of background and thought, experience in leadership, and a passion for empowering consumers and working to create a fair and just marketplace for all. Applications should be submitted online at **CR.org/boardapplication** by Dec. 15, 2022. A committee of the Board will review applications, conduct interviews, and recommend a slate to stand for election to a three-year term of Board service beginning in October 2023. Board members are required to attend three meetings per year and participate in Board business on an ongoing basis. No compensation is provided, but travel expenses are covered.

THIS ARTICLE OFFERED many great ideas on how to keep cool. Another idea people should know about is putting your feet in a bucket of water. It cools the entire body immediately without the need for a shower or swimming pool, and can easily be done at a desk or while watching TV.
–James Simcoe, Norwich, NY

EDITOR'S NOTE *That's true. Some research suggests that submerging your feet and/or hands and forearms in cool water can help lower your core temperature. And a small study published in JAMA in 2019 found that placing feet and ankles in water kept at 72° F reduced sweating and discomfort on very hot and humid days, while getting the entire body wet was more effective at cooling on very hot, dry days.*

CAR-BUYING ADVICE

"THE 7 ESSENTIAL Questions Every Car Buyer Should Ask" in the August issue had great points. One thing missing was the cost of insurance. Working as an agent, I often see people get a great deal on a car that may be more costly to insure based on many factors (those helpful safety features can be pricey to repair). We recommend calling your agent to check what your new premium would be. We can quote multiple models and help you decide, too!
–Amanda Harris, Glens Falls, NY

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SCHNEIDER

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Laptops

WE TESTED: 160 models
WE TEST FOR: The quality of the display, the ability to run large applications and games smoothly, battery life, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 69
Range: 33-91

LIGHTWEIGHT FOR A BIG SCREEN & RELIABLE
LG Gram 16 (Core i7) 16-inch
$1,450

91 OVERALL SCORE

COMPACT & LONG BATTERY LIFE
Samsung Galaxy Book Pro 360, 13-inch
$1,400

81 OVERALL SCORE

LARGE & POWERFUL
MSI Crosshair 17 A11UDK-643, 17-inch
$1,200

77 OVERALL SCORE

Pillows

WE TESTED: 29 models
WE TEST FOR: How the pillow maintains its shape after extended use, how well it supports side and back sleepers, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 67
Range: 53-90

MOST DURABLE
Comfort Revolution Blue Bubble Gel
$60

73 OVERALL SCORE

BARGAIN BUY
Rest Haven Memory Foam
$25 for a 2-pack

71 OVERALL SCORE

SUPPORT FOR BACK SLEEPERS
Ikea Lundtrav High
$23

68 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

With so many options, how do I choose the best pillow for me?

THERE ARE MORE than a dozen kinds of pillow fillings, which can make pillow shopping confusing. Narrow those choices by eliminating materials you're allergic to, such as latex or buckwheat. Next, check out CR's ratings to find pillows that will be the most supportive for the position you sleep in (such as the Ikea pillow above, which tested well for back sleepers). If you tend to get hot while you sleep, avoid solid memory foam, which can trap heat. Instead, look for pillows made with shredded foam (like the Rest Haven pillow above), which tend to keep you cooler, even more so than some of the pillows with gel layers we've tested. For more information and shopping guidance, go to **CR.org/pillowfill**.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

POOR — EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to **CR.org**.

Toasters

WE TESTED: 78 models
WE TEST FOR: How easy controls are to use and how accurately the model toasts bread at light and dark settings, how easy it is to clean the toaster, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 77
Range: 55-92

EXCELLENT BARGAIN
Oster 2-Slice Stainless Steel TSSTTRJB2S
$35

86 OVERALL SCORE

TOASTS 4 SLICES AT ONCE
Breville BTA840XL
$180

84 OVERALL SCORE

SPEEDY & EASY TO CLEAN
Kate Spade 2-Slice Toaster
$60

80 OVERALL SCORE

Coffee Makers

WE TESTED: 78 models
WE TEST FOR: Brew performance; ease of filling the reservoir, changing filters, and cleaning; how well the carafe pours coffee; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 71
Range: 55-90

COFFEE FOR A CROWD
Cuisinart DCC-T20 Touchscreen 14-Cup
$130

90 OVERALL SCORE

RELIABLE BRAND
Zojirushi Fresh Brew Plus 12-Cup (EC-YGC120)
$185

90 OVERALL SCORE

SLEEK & NICE PRICE
Russell Hobbs 8-Cup (CM8100GYR)
$110

78 OVERALL SCORE

Bike Helmets

WE TESTED: 89 models
WE TEST FOR: How easy it is to adjust the fit, how well ventilated it is, and the ability of the helmet to absorb the impact of a crash.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 70
Range: 33-90

TOP-RATED HELMET
Bontrager Starvos WaveCel
$105

90 OVERALL SCORE

VALUE PICK
Bell Granite MIPS
$35

82 OVERALL SCORE

GOOD URBAN-STYLE CHOICE
Nutcase Vio MIPS
$150

78 OVERALL SCORE

Battery Leaf Blowers

WE TESTED: 34 models
WE TEST FOR: How quickly and quietly a blower moves leaves and other debris from a lawn, and how easy it is to use.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 77
Range: 56-87

BEST HANDHELD BLOWER
Makita GBU01M1
$390

87 OVERALL SCORE

GREAT HANDHELD FOR LESS
Stihl BGA 57
$200

82 OVERALL SCORE

POWERFUL BACKPACK
Ego LB6002
$400

82 OVERALL SCORE

Note: *We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.*

COMING NEXT MONTH Winter Tires & More

I've been seeing a lot of good deals lately on refurbished cell phones. Is it wise to buy one?

A REFURBISHED CELL PHONE may be a good choice. These used phones can generally be purchased at a significant discount—sometimes $100 or more off the price of a new model. But keep in mind that companies may define "refurbished" in different ways—potentially making some a better deal than others.

Refurbished phones offered by manufacturers and cell phone carriers are generally "certified pre-owned," which means they are used phones (likely returned or traded in) that have been inspected and sometimes upgraded with new parts. They usually also come with a generous warranty. For example, refurbished iPhones sold directly by Apple are restored with the same parts used in new models. They also have a new battery, outer shell, cables, and accessories, and even a fresh white box. Refurbished iPhones come with a 1-year warranty, too. Samsung uses similar standards for its refurbished phones, with a new battery and a 1-year warranty.

But some major retailers don't promise these kinds of upgrades. Amazon says that refurbished "Amazon Renewed" phones are inspected and that any faulty parts are replaced, but the battery may be at only 80 percent capacity—unlike a new one. Walmart sells refurbished phones without the original packaging and may include a generic charger (which should work fine; it just won't be manufacturer-branded). Amazon and Walmart offer a 90-day warranty. There are also refurbished phones sold on third-party online marketplaces such as Newegg, but some sites don't include a warranty at all. Our experts say to avoid refurbished products that don't have a warranty of at least 90 days.

LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at CR.org/askourexperts ... and watch for the answers.

Will eating foods containing added MSG make me sick?

THERE'S NO EVIDENCE that MSG—monosodium glutamate, a food additive that combines sodium with the naturally occurring amino acid glutamate—has any ill effect on us. MSG is added to foods such as canned soups, soy sauce, and some snacks, like Doritos, to give them umami, a complex savory flavor.

The concern that MSG makes people feel bad is probably a result of a single 1968 report published in the New England Journal of Medicine blaming headaches and nausea on potentially eating MSG. News of this single report became widespread. But there was no scientific research then—or now—showing MSG to be harmful, says Kantha Shelke, founder of Corvus Blue, a food science and research firm based in Chicago. In fact, scientists have not been able to consistently find any reactions to MSG in people who identify themselves as being sensitive to this additive. Nevertheless, if you're concerned that you may be sensitive to MSG, cut back on eating processed, packaged, and restaurant foods that contain it. Also know that while MSG is fine to consume in moderate amounts, it has 480 mg of sodium per teaspoon. (The daily recommendation for sodium is less than 2,300 mg.)

I keep getting voicemails telling me my car warranty is expiring. What should I do?

THESE VOICEMAILS are almost always a scam. In fact, the kind of auto-warranty robocalls you're receiving (where you're told that your warranty or insurance policy is about to expire) have been consumers' most frequently filed complaint to the Federal Communications Commission for the past two years. What do the scammers want from you? They're hoping you'll reveal personal information—such as your driver's license or Social Security number—which they can then use. They may also be hoping to sell you a third-party "service contract" you don't need that could cost thousands of dollars. What makes it hard to be sure these calls are from scammers is that they may have real information about you, such as your car's make and model. Our advice? Never interact with callers pitching extended warranty products. If you decide you would like an extended warranty, contact your car dealer directly to see what options the dealership may offer.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE BLOCH

CR Insights

IN THE KNOW

Kitchen Money Savers

Making just a few of these simple updates in your kitchen could save you $100 or more this year.

SAVE WITH A LABEL MAKER

Phomemo D30 Label Maker $33

By labeling and dating leftovers and pantry staples, you'll find items faster and waste less food—something that costs the average U.S. household $1,866 per year, according to a 2020 study. In our trial of five handheld label makers, this Phomemo was a breeze to use.

CULTIVATE A COUNTERTOP GARDEN

AeroGarden Harvest 360 $130

Growing your own greens means not throwing away wilted store-bought ones that you couldn't eat fast enough. And with a hydroponic planter like this one—which uses LED lights to mimic the sun—you'll have fresh lettuce year-round. Potential savings? $62 in the first year, if you spend just $4 less per week on groceries.

SWAP STORE-BOUGHT SELTZER FOR ON-DEMAND FIZZY WATER

SodaStream Terra $99

If you buy this SodaStream (among the most convenient models that we've tested) and make 1 liter a day rather than buying seltzer at 86 cents per liter, you'll save $138 in the first year (and save 365 plastic bottles).*

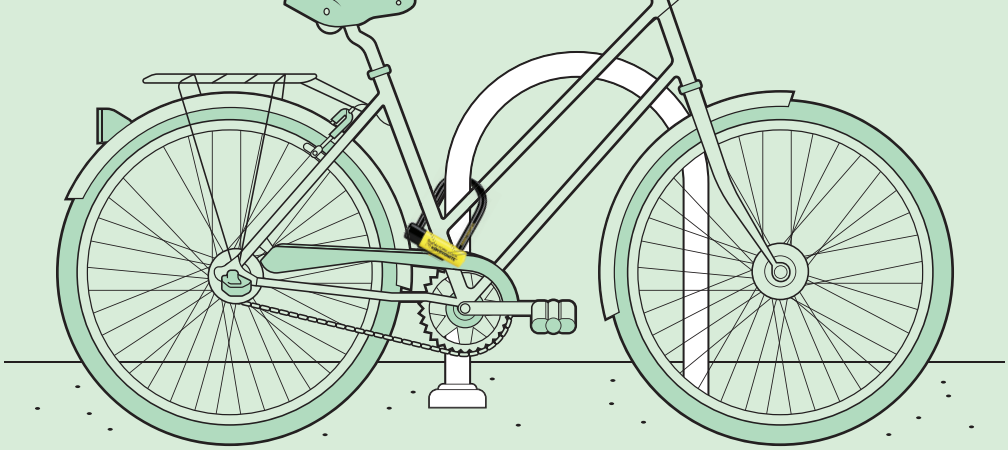
CUT BACK ON PAPER TOWELS

MioEco Reusable Unpaper Towels $20 for a 10-pack

It's easy to use paper towels for every minor task—but it's a pricey habit. You may be paying as much as $3 or more per roll. To recoup some of that money, swap in these reusable towels made of biodegradable cotton: If you currently use two paper rolls a month, you'll save around $72 in just the first year.

ILLUSTRATIONS: RODRIGO DAMATI. PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: SODASTREAM; AEROGARDEN; PAUL HOPE/CONSUMER REPORTS; PHOMEMO

*For more personalized savings, use our soda maker calculator at CR.org/sodasavings.



SECURITY UPDATE

Keep Your Bike Safe

CR TESTED A DOZEN bicycle locks to see which ones were most likely to thwart thieves. "In our tests, we found that heavier locks are better for security because they take longer to break open or cut through," says Bernie Deitrick, CR's senior test program leader. "But, of course, the heavier the lock, the less easy it is to carry." For urban users—especially those who leave their bikes unattended for more than a few minutes—a heavy U-lock, like the Kryptonite at right, may be your best bet. It was the most difficult to break open with crowbars, electric grinders, and hacksaws—all of which we used in our tests. But if you're just leaving your bike for a minute or two while on a recreational ride, a lighter, less secure lock may be a sufficient enough deterrent.

Regardless of which lock you choose, always secure your bike in a well-lit area to a solid object that can't be lifted or easily cut through. Experts suggest locking your bike frame first. Then, if you have an expandable or chain lock, include the back wheel with the frame because it's the pricier of the two wheels to replace.

Kryptonite New York FAHGETTABOUDIT Mini U-Lock
$154
WEIGHT
4 lb., 8 oz.
95
OVERALL SCORE

Abus Granit X-Plus 540 U-Lock
$122
WEIGHT
3 lb., 12 oz.
83
OVERALL SCORE

Litelok Core Plus
$170
WEIGHT
4 lb., 15 oz.
75
OVERALL SCORE

Seatylock Foldylock Compact Folding Bike Lock
$85
WEIGHT
2 lb., 3 oz.
65
OVERALL SCORE

For our full ratings of 12 locks, Digital and All Access members can go to ***CR.org/bikelocks****.*

PHOTOS, BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER/GETTY IMAGES; CONSUMER REPORTS; TOOTSIE; MARS, INC.; CONSUMER REPORTS

CR Time Traveler CANDY

1928 The phrase "trick or treat" first appears in a Michigan newspaper to describe kids threatening to soap up people's windows on Halloween if they weren't given treats.

1939 Candy bar wrappers don't have calorie counts, so CR tests some and finds that one Hershey's bar has 1,150 calories.

1943 CR tests 20 candy bars and finds that 19 were smaller than those sold in 1939—meaning shoppers spent 23 percent more for their favorites. Only the Tootsie Roll retained its 1939 size.

1954 M&M's introduces peanut M&M's—a hot new twist on its popular candy. (In 2021, M&M's are the most popular kids Halloween candy.)

1963 CR reports on an insect infestation in the candy industry, when the FDA seizes half a million bags of cocoa beans believed to contain bugs.

POOR — EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED

FACE-OFF

The Best Small Trucks

BIG PICKUPS, like the Ford F-150 and Chevrolet Silverado 1500, have been the top-selling trucks in the U.S. for decades. But smaller, SUV-based "trucklets," like the Ford Maverick and Honda Ridgeline, are gaining in popularity.

The Maverick and Ridgeline are both good choices, but they offer different driving experiences. The base Maverick, for example, is a hybrid with impressive mpg and range, so it costs much less to fuel up than the Ridgeline. The pricier Ridgeline offers more refinement, power, and towing capacity. With our reviews and ratings, at right, see whether either of these trucks recommended by CR is right for you.

*Calculation is based on gas costing $4.50 a gallon and 12,000 miles driven annually.

2022 Honda Ridgeline		2022 Ford Maverick Hybrid
82	OVERALL SCORE	76
$38,140-$45,570	BASE PRICE RANGE	$20,995-$26,860
$1,295	DESTINATION CHARGE	$1,495
Overall 20/City 13/Hwy 29 mpg	CR'S MPG	Overall 37/City 33/Hwy 39 mpg
83	ROAD-TEST SCORE	82
^	PREDICTED RELIABILITY	!
^^	PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION	^
7.3 seconds	0-60 MPH ACCELERATION	8.3 seconds
5,000 lb.	TOW CAPACITY	2,000 lb.
380 miles	DRIVING RANGE	505 miles
$2,755	ANNUAL FUEL COST*	$1,475

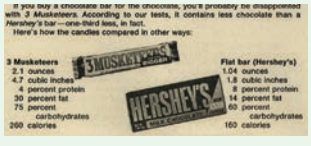
CR'S TAKE The Ridgeline has an inviting interior, all-wheel drive, and a smooth 280-hp, 3.5-liter V6 engine, with a 5-foot, 4-inch bed and an innovative dual-action tailgate that folds both down and to the side for access to a lockable underfloor storage area. But the Ridgeline's higher price and not-as-great fuel economy may make thrifty drivers lean toward the Maverick.

CR'S TAKE The Maverick, while not exactly comfy, is a civilized ride, and outscores every pickup in its class—except the Ridgeline. The truck has a 4-foot, 6-inch bed and a standard hybrid powertrain, good for 37 mpg overall—better than any other truck, and most cars and SUVs. That makes the Maverick an all-around smart pick. (One caveat: This hybrid comes only in front-wheel drive.)

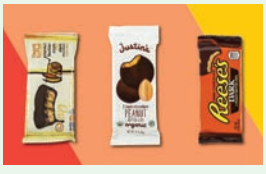
PHOTOS, FACING PAGE: KRYPTONITE; ABUS; SEATYLOCK; LITELOK. THIS PAGE: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

1973 We warn that "Orbitz with Blower"—a packet of candy pellets with a straw to "shoot" them at others—may be dangerous to children.

1982 To uncover the candy with the most chocolate, CR tests 3 Musketeers and Hershey's bars. The 3 Musketeers looks bigger because it's filled with nougat, but the Hershey's bar contains more chocolate.



1996 Our testers taste a dozen chocolate brands costing from $5.75 to $46 per pound. Teuscher, the most expensive, is also judged one of the best-tasting nut candies.



2019 We compare three dark chocolate peanut butter cups—Theo, Justin's, and Reese's—and find that Theo cups are much lower in sodium and sugar than the other two.

2022 Eighty percent of Americans say they plan to go trick-or-treating this year. Below, a visual guide to how much candy corn you can eat for 100 calories.

Brach's Candy Corn

To see more 100-calorie candy counts, go to ***CR.org/halloweencandy****.*

FOOD IQ™

6 VEGETABLES THAT ARE HEALTHIER WHEN COOKED

YOU MIGHT BE surprised to learn that some vegetables can be more nutritious when cooked rather than raw. That's because cooking increases the content of some nutrients and helps your body use others more easily. Here's how to unleash the nutritional potential of common veggies and boost their flavor, too.

Carrots

A 2008 study in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry found that boiling carrots until tender boosted the concentration of cancer-fighting carotenoids by 14 percent.
COOKING TIP: Boil carrots whole before slicing, which helps keep nutrients from escaping into the cooking water.

Spinach

You'll absorb more calcium and iron from these leafy greens if you eat them cooked. The reason? Spinach has oxalic acid, which blocks the absorption of the minerals, but high temperatures break down the acid. One study found that boiling spinach, then plunging it into cold water, reduced oxalate content by 40 percent.
COOKING TIP: Blanch fresh spinach leaves in boiling water for 2 minutes, then plunge in ice water for a few more, and drain.

Mushrooms

Cooking concentrates the nutrients in mushrooms, so a cup of cooked white ones has about twice as much muscle-building potassium, heart-healthy niacin, and immune-boosting zinc as a cup of raw ones.
COOKING TIP: Mushrooms readily soak up fat, so go easy on the oil to keep calories in check. For a flavor boost, sauté with garlic and sprigs of fresh thyme.

Red Bell Peppers

These are rich in vitamin C. Plus, they're a great source of carotenoids—the antioxidants that aid eye health—which are better absorbed when cooked.
COOKING TIP: Lightly roast or stir-fry bell peppers to maximize their vitamin C (which can escape in boiling water). Cooking them for 5 minutes generally gets you the most nutritional benefits.

Tomatoes

Whether tomatoes are baked, fried, or puréed, heat increases the phytochemical lycopene, which has been linked to lower rates of cancer and heart disease. One landmark study found that heating tomatoes for 30 minutes at 190.4° F boosted the absorbable lycopene by 35 percent.
COOKING TIP: Roasting tomatoes in an oven or air fryer concentrates their flavor. Put quartered tomatoes on a sheet pan; drizzle with olive oil and balsamic vinegar; sprinkle with garlic, salt, and pepper; then roast for about a half-hour at 200° F.

Asparagus

A study in the International Journal of Food Science & Technology found that cooking these stalks raised the level of five disease-fighting antioxidants by 23 to 98 percent. Another study found that cooking asparagus more than doubled the levels of two types of phenolic acid, which some studies have linked to lower cancer rates.
COOKING TIP: To keep spears crisp and help them retain nutrients, dunk them whole into boiling water. Remove when bright green. Toss with lemon juice and olive oil: The oil helps you absorb the antioxidants.

TOP VEGGIE-COOKING TOOLS

These highly rated pieces can help you boil, roast, sauté, and stir-fry beautifully.

AN EASY WAY TO ROAST VEGGIES ON YOUR COUNTERTOP

Chefman TurboFry Air Fryer 4.5 Quart
$100

87 OVERALL SCORE

GREAT FOR BOILING & SOUPS

Merten & Storck German Enameled Iron 1873
$170

83 OVERALL SCORE

TOP PICK FOR STEAMING & SAUTÉING

DeLonghi Livensa All-in-One Programmable CKM1641D
$160

78 OVERALL SCORE

NICE PAN FOR STIR-FRYING

Made In Cookware Stainless Steel
$90

75 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTO, TOP: ADOBE STOCK. BOTTOM: MANUFACTURERS

For more healthy cooking tips, go to CR.org/cookedveggies.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Hedge Trimmers

IF YOU HAVE boxwoods, forsythia, or just general overgrowth, a hedge trimmer is the best tool for the job. Hedge trimmers, which use an oscillating blade, can cut branches that are up to ¾ inch thick. The blade oscillates back and forth, trimming the brush as you move it along. A model that rates highly in our tests should coast along effortlessly, leaving a path of evenly cut shrubbery in its wake. A not-so-good model will struggle to trim neatly, getting caught on tough brush and leaving you with lopsided hedges. One note: Gas trimmers are probably overkill for most yards. Instead, consider these electric models, which are quieter and easy to maintain.

BATTERY

Ego HT2411
$200

85 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Milwaukee 2726-21HD
$350

83 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 TRIMMING
- 3/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

DeWalt DCHT820P1
$220

81 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 3/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Stihl HSA 45
$130

80 OVERALL SCORE

- 4/5 TRIMMING
- 5/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Kobalt (Lowe's) KHT 2040-06
$160

80 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 SAFETY
- 3/5 RUN TIME

Atlas 56935
$170

79 OVERALL SCORE

- 4/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Toro 51841
$200

78 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Skil HT4221-10
$150

77 OVERALL SCORE

- 4/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Craftsman CMCHT810C1
$120

72 OVERALL SCORE

- 4/5 TRIMMING
- 5/5 HANDLING
- 3/5 SAFETY
- 2/5 RUN TIME

CORDED

Sun Joe HJ22HTE
$50

75 OVERALL SCORE

- 4/5 TRIMMING
- 4/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Worx WG217
$90

73 OVERALL SCORE

- 4/5 TRIMMING
- 3/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Black+Decker HH2455
$90

64 OVERALL SCORE

- 3/5 TRIMMING
- 3/5 HANDLING
- 3/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

Greenworks 2212002
$220

85 OVERALL SCORE

- 5/5 TRIMMING
- 3/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 SAFETY
- 5/5 RUN TIME

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

POOR — EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED

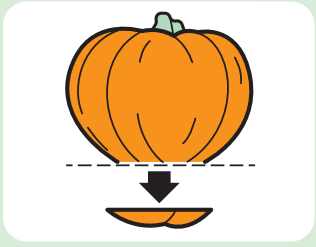
CR SMART SOLUTION

A Better Way to Carve Your Pumpkin

30-45 minutes

TOOLS NEEDED

- Carving kit (see our suggestion at right)
- Large bowl
- Sewing transfer paper
- Pen or marker
- LED candle



STEP 1 **CUT THE BASE (INSTEAD OF CUTTING THE TOP)**

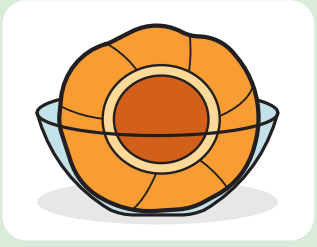
"I keep the stems on and carve out a circle at the base of the pumpkin," says expert pumpkin carver Gene Granata of Masterpiece Pumpkins in California. When you pull out that circular piece, a lot of seeds and pulp will come with it, which cuts down on the time spent removing them.

STEP 2 **THIN THE RIND WHERE YOU PLAN TO CARVE**

Once you've cleaned out the pulp, thin the rind of the pumpkin (using a scraping motion) where you plan to carve it until the rind is about ¾ inch thick. If you're using a stencil, tape it securely to the face of the pumpkin to see how large an area of the rind you need to thin.

STEP 3 **TRACE YOUR DESIGN DIRECTLY ONTO IT**

Paper stencils won't lie flat on a round pumpkin, so it's hard to make precise cuts. Granata's trick: Use sewing transfer paper. "Put the bright side of the transfer paper on the pumpkin, then tape your stencil over it and trace with a pen. Now the design is directly on the pumpkin," he says.



STEP 4 **PUT THE PUMPKIN IN A LARGE BOWL**

Now that you have your blueprint on the pumpkin, you can start to carve. To make the process easier, Granata recommends putting the pumpkin in a large bowl—carving side up, as shown above. That way you'll have a good angle and the pumpkin won't roll around as you cut.

STEP 5 **CARVE AT THE CENTER OF YOUR DESIGN**

To keep the structural integrity of the pumpkin, Granata says to carve from the center of the design and move outward. Once you cut a section, don't remove it right away. "Keep pieces in, so you're less likely to break any connecting bits as you continue to carve. Once you finish, pop them all out," he says.

STEP 6 **USE AN LED CANDLE**

Place the pumpkin over the light. You may prefer a real votive, but Granata points out that an LED candle is safer and the pumpkin will last longer because you're not heating it up. Plus, LED lights come in a variety of colors, so you can choose a unique shade that's fitting for your design.

TOP CARVING KIT

Elmchee 13-Piece Professional Pumpkin Carving Kit $15

We tried six kits–and this one impressed us the most. It comes with six double-sided carving tools, as well as a scraper, a scoop, an engraving pen, two tooth saws, and hole punches.

PHOTOS: STEPHEN YANG

For more carving tips, go to CR.org/pumpkintools.

RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT **CR.ORG/MORE**.

JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE SUVs

Jeep is recalling about 99,000 2022 Jeep Grand Cherokee and 2021 and 2022 Jeep Grand Cherokee L SUVs due to a faulty batch of taillights installed on SUVs built between Dec. 3, 2020, and Nov. 23, 2021. The taillights may have been damaged before installation and, as a result, might not illuminate.
What to do: Jeep will notify owners of the affected vehicles by mail, but you can also call Fiat Chrysler Automobiles at 800-853-1403. Not all vehicles had faulty taillights installed, so dealerships will inspect recalled vehicles and, if necessary, replace the taillights, free of charge.

RIO HAMMOCK CHAIRS

ShelterLogic is recalling about 786,000 Rio-branded swinging hammock chairs because the improper insertion of the pins provided for assembly can cause the chair's legs to collapse, posing an injury hazard to the user. The chairs were sold at Blain's Farm & Fleet, Camping World, Costco, Lowe's, and Tractor Supply Company stores nationwide and online at Amazon, campingworld.com, costco.com, lowes.com, walmart.com, and other websites from January 2020 through June 2022 for $40 to $60.
What to do: Stop using the chairs and go to rio.shelterlogic.com or safety.shelterlogic.com to get new instructions that will help you verify proper and safe pin insertion on the chair legs. (Do not use the chair again until you have reviewed the new instructions and made sure the pins are properly inserted into the chair's legs.) You can also contact ShelterLogic at 888-635-3359 for details.

SUNVILLA LED MARKET UMBRELLAS

SunVilla is recalling about 400,000 10-foot solar LED Market umbrellas because the lithium-ion batteries in the solar panels can overheat, posing fire and burn hazards. The umbrellas were sold at Costco stores nationwide and online at costco.com from December 2020 through May 2022 for $130 to $160.
What to do: Stop using the umbrella, remove the solar panel puck (containing the lithium-ion battery) from the top of the umbrella, store the puck out of the sun and away from combustible material, and do not charge the puck with the AC adapter. Return the umbrella and solar puck to any Costco store for a full refund. If you are not able to return the product to a Costco, contact SunVilla at 866-600-3133 or go to sunvilla.com/pages/recall for details and instructions on how to receive a refund.

SCHOLASTIC SHAKE LOOK TOUCH BOOKS

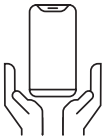
Scholastic is recalling about 185,700 Shake Look Touch books because the pompoms on the book can detach, posing a choking hazard to young children. The books were sold at bookstores, specialty, big box, and other stores nationwide and online at barnesandnoble.com, booksamillion.com, homegoods.com, and other websites from January 2020 through April 2022 for about $13.
What to do: Take the book away from young children and cut off the pompoms. Call Scholastic at 888-724-1872 or go to www.recallrtr.com/slt for details. You can receive a $10 gift card by registering your recalled product online at www.recallrtr.com/slt, submitting a picture of the book with removed pompoms, and affirming that the removed pompoms will be disposed of in the trash. You can use the book after removing the pompoms.

FLEXIMOUNTS OVERHEAD GARAGE RACKS

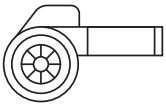
Loctek is recalling about 17,500 Fleximounts overhead garage storage racks because one of the U-shaped buckles on the supporting cables can fail, posing an impact injury hazard to the user or a bystander if the rack falls. The racks were sold online at Amazon, ebay.com, fleximounts.com, homedepot.com, walmart.com, and wayfair.com, and at Home Depot stores nationwide from October 2020 through April 2022 for about $230.
What to do: Unload all items from the racks and go to fleximounts.com/recalls for a free repair kit. The repair kit includes an instructional video link and written instructions on adding additional support to the storage rack. You can also contact Loctek at 855-585-5618 for details.

OCTOBER IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

CELL PHONE PLANS



LEAF BLOWERS



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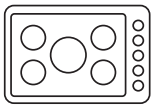
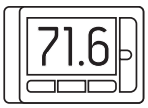


THERMOSTATS



PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

Painting Made Easier

If you're looking to save same cash and DIY it, there's good news. Refreshing your rooms is a much less fraught process with innovative paints, tools, and strategies.

by Tanya Christian

BEHR ULTRA CASCADE GREEN $44

88 OVERALL SCORE

THE PANDEMIC YEARS haven't been hard just on us: Our homes have seen some serious wear and tear since we've spent so much time in them. A fresh coat of paint can be an instant room reviver, but the cost of hiring a professional (which has only increased with inflation) may make you hesitate.

"Painters are typically charging $20 to $50 per hour, or an average of about $3.30 per square foot," says Bailey Carson, a home care expert at Angi, the home services website. So an average 340-square-foot living room might cost $1,000 or more to paint. But if you brandish your own roller, you could do the same job, including buying some new equipment like rollers and a ladder, for as little as $150.

Being the holder of the roller may not sound so appealing to you, though. After all, painting can be hard work. But there are new and improved paints and innovative tools that can help make this kind of project less daunting. Most of today's paints don't require a primer, and they provide quality coverage in a single coat. They're also safer for you to work with, with lower amounts of VOCs (volatile organic compounds), the stuff you really don't want to breathe in while painting and as the paint dries.

What's also easier is choosing the right colors: Some companies will now send large color samples directly to your door so that you can get a real feel for how the color will look on your walls. And once you've decided, the right tools can help you minimize any mess and finish the job faster.

If you're game, what follows is a do-it-yourself painting guide packed with advice from experts that will help take you–in the least stressful way possible–from choosing your paint finish, colors, and tools to enjoying your freshly painted room.

Choosing Your Paints

1. FOUR COMMON PAINT FINISHES

Matte/flat: This nonreflective finish is best for living rooms, kid-free bedrooms, and ceilings because while it hides dings and flaws well, it's not particularly resistant to scuffs and stains.
Eggshell: A low-luster finish with a hint of sheen, this is a nice choice for living rooms, bedrooms, and libraries or TV rooms. It's a bit more resistant to scuffs than a matte finish.
Satin: This has a shinier finish than eggshell and is great for high-traffic areas like hallways, dining rooms, kitchens, and bathrooms because it's tougher to scuff up and stain. (For those last two rooms, look for "mold and mildew resistant" claims, which mean that the paint should withstand high moisture.)
Semi-gloss: The most lustrous finish, it resists stains best and is easiest to clean. Use it on all trim, such as around doors.

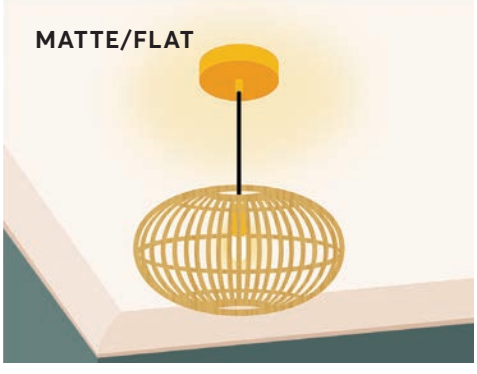


PHOTO: BEN GEBO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MITCH BLUNT

2. FINDING YOUR COLOR

We've all had those moments at the paint store when we're overwhelmed by the endless strips of papers with gradations of blues, greens, yellows, and whites. How to decide what will look right on your walls? Forget those strips and start your search online to narrow the field. Major paint brands like PPG and Glidden offer online "visualizers" that allow you to upload a photo of your room, then apply different colors digitally to get a sense of what will look best.

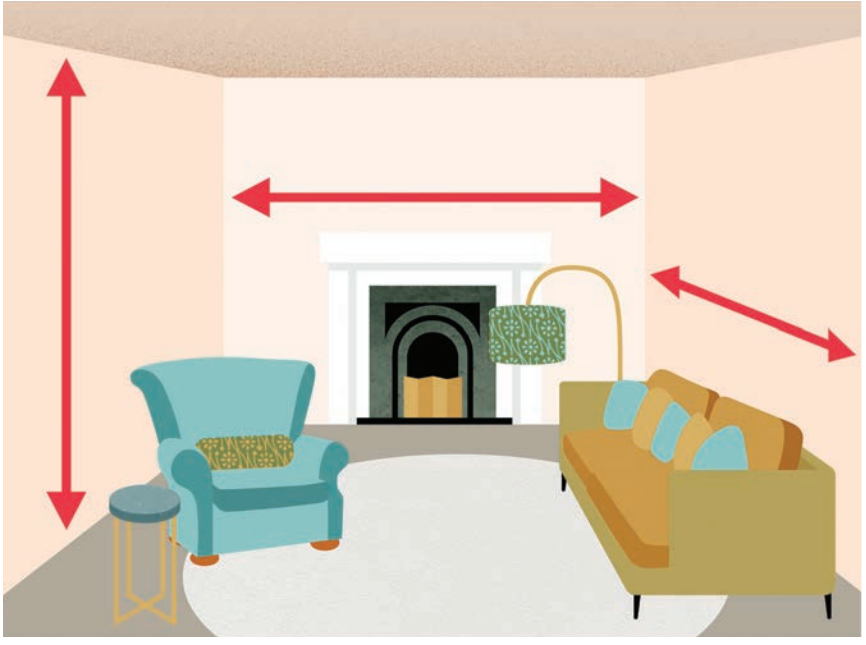
Once you've winnowed the field to a few of your top contenders, you'll want some real-world samples. Instead of taping small paint chips to a wall or buying sample-sized cans to paint patches of color, try a more convenient alternative. Brands like Benjamin Moore, Clare, and Sherwin-Williams now offer large peel-and-stick paint squares (ranging from about 8x8 inches to 9x14 inches) that you can easily move around to see how a color will reflect light on different walls. No matter which method you choose, place the colors at eye level and leave them up for at least a couple of days.

Also consider accent walls and colored trims. If you're painting all four walls white, for example, Nicole Gibbons, an interior designer and the founder and CEO of Clare paint, suggests an unexpected color on the ceiling, like a cobalt blue, or an accent wall in a deep green. Or simply paint the trim a different color. It's a small but easy way to transform a room's mood and create visual interest.

3. HOW MANY CANS WILL YOU NEED?

Most brands offer paint by the gallon, which can cover 350 to 400 square feet of walls. That means painting all of the walls (and ceiling) in a small bedroom will typically require one can of paint. A living room with high ceilings will probably need two gallons. To estimate your room's paint needs, measure the length, width, and height, then plug those numbers into a free online paint calculation tool (nearly every major brand offers one) to see how many cans it suggests. If you need several cans, see if the brand offers a 5-gallon bucket (often at a discount).

Keep in mind that you'll probably use a different finish of paint for the trim around windows and doors, so it's best to calculate the amount needed for those separately. (Most of the calculator tools let you specify a number of doors and windows.) Typically, a 1-quart-sized bucket should be enough for all the trim in a standard 10x10-foot room. The same is true of smaller projects, such as painting a single accent wall or just the ceiling with one coat of paint.



4. PICKING YOUR PAINT BRAND

There are three main things CR testers look for when rating paint: 1) that it spreads smoothly on walls from the first brush stroke to the last, 2) whether the paint hides the old color on your wall—even if it was a dark shade—in just one coat, and 3) whether it resists fading over time and stands up to general cleaning (such as wiping away stains, particularly important in a bathroom or kitchen). "A weaker paint will constantly need to be retouched later on," says Richard Handel, who oversees CR's paint ratings. "A great durable paint, on the other hand, should last at least five to seven years."

In our tests to assess quality and longevity, we determine how effective a paint is at "hiding" by applying a single coat over black paint, then evaluating how well it covered it up. Then, to find out if a paint resists tough oil- and water-based stains, our testers stain a dried swath of paint with coffee and a sootlike substance. Once it has dried, we try to wash the stain off. Then we use a colorimeter to measure how close the color of the cleaned paint is to the original coat. The closer it is, the higher the score in our stain-resistance test. This test also indicates how the paint will hold up over time. Let our ratings on page 23 guide you.

Your DIY Tool Kit

1. Drop cloths Keep furniture and floors protected from paint with reusable cloths. **PRO PICK:** HDX Plastic Drop Cloths, $3.

2. Roller tray This large tray has a magnetic brush holder to prevent handles from getting messy, and it easily washes clean. **PRO PICK:** Handy Paint Tray, $12.

3. Step stool The stool above is over 3 feet high and has a trough to store tools and a hook for a paint can. **PRO PICK:** Rubbermaid RMA-2 2 Lightweight Aluminum Step Stool with Project Top, $55.

4. Painter's tape For clean lines, apply painter's tape to baseboards, trim, and where the ceiling meets the walls before painting. Remove when paint is dry, or roughly an hour after the final layer of paint goes on. **PRO PICK:** ScotchBlue Sharp Lines Multi-Surface Painter's Tape, $6.

5. Metal putty knife Use this to apply spackling compound in cracks and nail holes before painting. **PRO PICK:** DeWalt 3-Inch Putty Knife, $14.

6. Fast-drying spackling compound This product is premixed and lets you know when it's dry by changing color. Use it to fill in holes and cracks. **PRO PICK:** Dap DryDex Dry Time Indicator Spackling, $9.

7. Paint roller Fabric rollers made of microfiber hold more paint than foam rollers. That means you don't have to load your roller as often, and you'll achieve a much smoother, cleaner finish. **PRO PICK:** Wooster Pro Microfiber High Density Roller Cover, $11.

8. Extension pole Beloved by experts, this handy tool allows you to paint faster with less effort because it eliminates bending down every time you need to load your roller. **PRO PICK:** Mr. LongArm 3204 Pro-Pole Extension Pole, $21.

9. Paint brushes A quality brush is key to a nice-looking paint job. Use them for greater precision around trim and detail work. **PRO PICK:** Purdy 140853100 XL Brush 3 Pack, $22.

10. Sanding sponge Your go-to for getting walls smooth, this sponge reduces dust while sanding. **PRO PICK:** Auerllcy Sanding Sponge 4-pack, $7.

PHOTOS: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS

Getting the Job Done

1. PREP THE ROOM

Give yourself at least 3 feet of space to maneuver with your roller. If you can't get all of the furniture out of a room, move it to the center and throw a drop cloth over everything—and your floors. Remove wall plates from outlets, switches, and vents.

Cover trim and ceiling edges with painter's tape. This prevents color from bleeding between sections. Use long strips the length of your arm and smooth out any bubbles or wrinkles. Don't remove the tape until the paint is dry (otherwise the edges can smear).

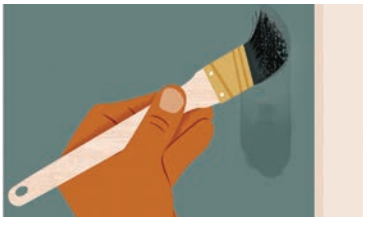
Smooth your walls. Scrape away cracked, peeling old paint with a putty knife, and fill nail holes and cracks with spackling compound. Taper sharp edges and rough spots with very fine sandpaper, especially if wallpaper was just taken down.

2. THE RIGHT STROKES

Mix paint with a stirrer to ensure the best color and consistency. If you're painting the ceiling, start there before tackling walls.
Saturate your roller in paint until it's almost dripping.
Smear the paint on the walls with a roller in an X, V, Z, or W pattern in a 2x2-foot section. This spreads the paint in an even film. "If you just go up and down with a full roller and then to the right, there will be more paint where you started than where you finish," says CR's Handel.
Spread paint from those initial strokes to fill the 2x2-foot area.
Smooth the section with vertical strokes, rolling from the top down. Near trim, use an angled brush. Start about a quarter of an inch away from the trim, then gently push the paint toward the edge.

3. HOW TO DO TOUCH-UPS

After the paint has fully dried (it can take as little as 4 hours, but check the paint label), inspect each wall for thin spots where old paint may be peeking through. Brush over them with small amounts of paint, beginning at the center of the touch-up area and feathering it out lightly into the surrounding paint. Then air the room. Windows should be left open for two to three days after painting to protect you from even low levels of exposure to vapors found in paints. (Even "zero" VOC paints have trace amounts.)

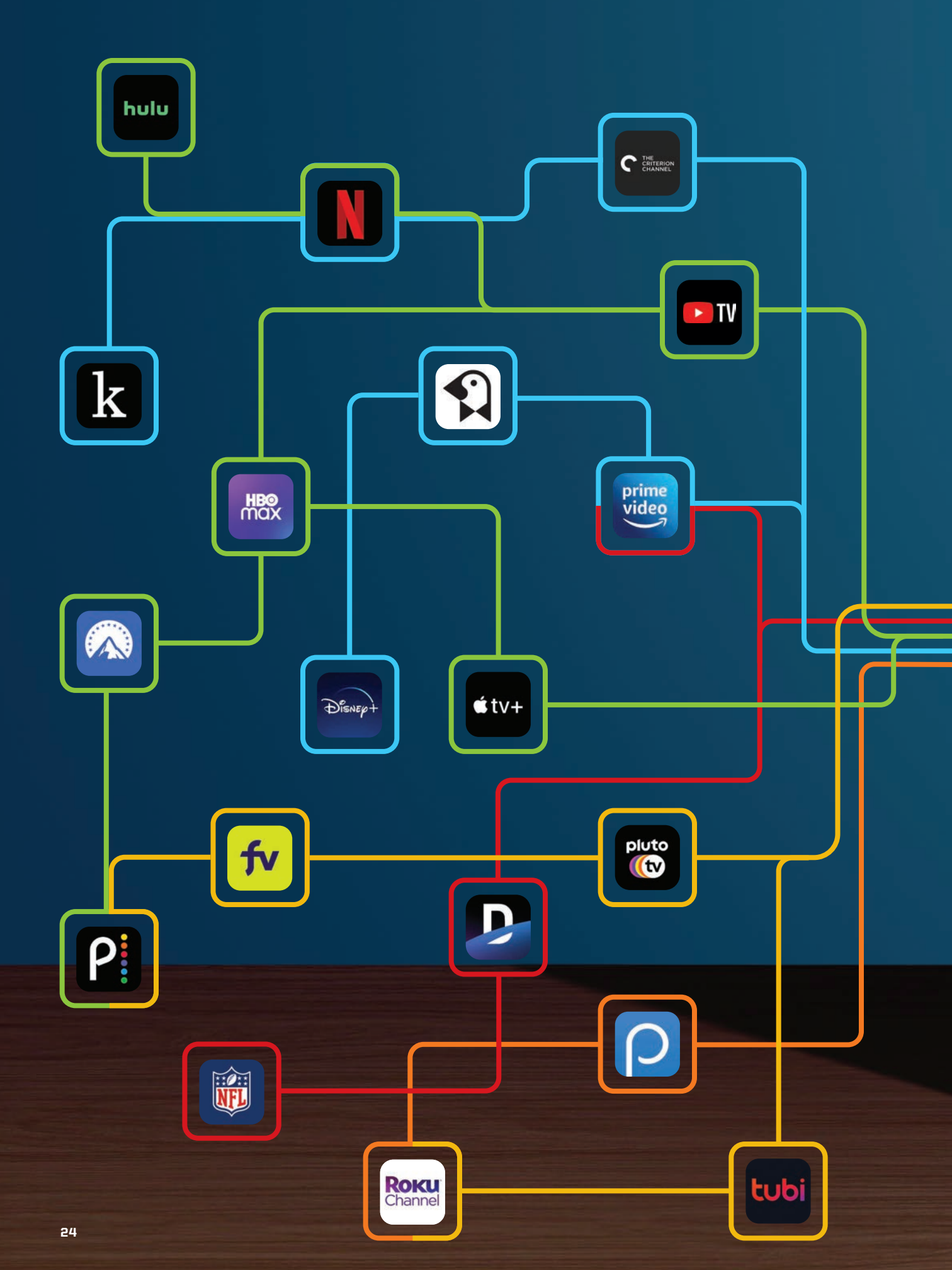


Ratings › **Paint by the Numbers** Price doesn't determine the quality or performance of a paint. Instead, choose a formula that will hide the old color of your walls well and stand up to stains for long-lasting results.

	Brand + Product	Overall Score	Price	Test Results		Features	
				Hiding	Staining	Self-priming	Claims zero VOCs
	INTERIOR PAINTS						
	✓ **Behr** Marquee (Home Depot)	95	$53	⏫	⏫	●	
	✓ **Behr** Dynasty (Home Depot)	91	$59	⏫	⏫	●	
	✓ **Valspar** Reserve	88	$52	⏫	⏫	●	
	✓ **Behr** Ultra (Home Depot)	88	$44	⏫	⏫	●	
	$ **Behr** Premium Plus (Home Depot)	86	$35	⏫	🔼	●	●
	✓ **HGTV Home by Sherwin-Williams** Showcase (Lowe's)	86	$49	⏫	⏫	●	
	✓ **HGTV Home by Sherwin-Williams** Infinity (Lowe's)	83	$62	🔼	⏫	●	
	✓ **Kilz** Complete Coat Interior (Walmart)	81	$40	⏫	🔼	●	
	HGTV Home by Sherwin-Williams Ovation Plus (Lowe's)	77	$41	🔼	🔼	●	●
	Benjamin Moore Aura	74	$90	⏫	➖	●	
	Prestige Paints Lifetime Interior	70	$41	⏫	➖	●	
	Clark + Kensington Enamel (Ace)	68	$41	⏫	➖	●	
	Valspar Ultra Interior (Lowe's)	66	$34	⏫	➖	●	
	PPG Timeless Interior (Home Depot)	65	$54	⏫	➖	●	
	Valspar Signature (Lowe's)	64	$44	🔼	➖	●	
	Glidden Diamond (Home Depot)	60	$28	⏫	🔽	●	●
	Sherwin-Williams Duration Home	57	$77	➖	🔼	●	
	Benjamin Moore Regal Select	56	$75	⏫	⏬	●	●
	Sherwin-Williams Emerald	54	$82	➖	➖	●	
	Ace Royal Interiors	53	$34	⏫	⏬	●	
	Glidden Premium (Home Depot)	50	$24	🔼	⏬	●	●
	Color Place Ultra Interior (Walmart)	45	$20	🔼	⏬	●	
	Color Place Interior (Walmart)	44	$16	🔼	⏬		

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines test results from our hiding and staining evaluations. Because a brand's matte/flat, eggshell, satin, and semi-gloss formulations perform similarly overall, we use satin for testing or eggshell if satin isn't available. **Hiding** determines how well a coat of paint will cover a dark-painted wall once dried. **Staining** assesses how well a paint resists tough oil- and water-based stains, and how easily those wipe clean.

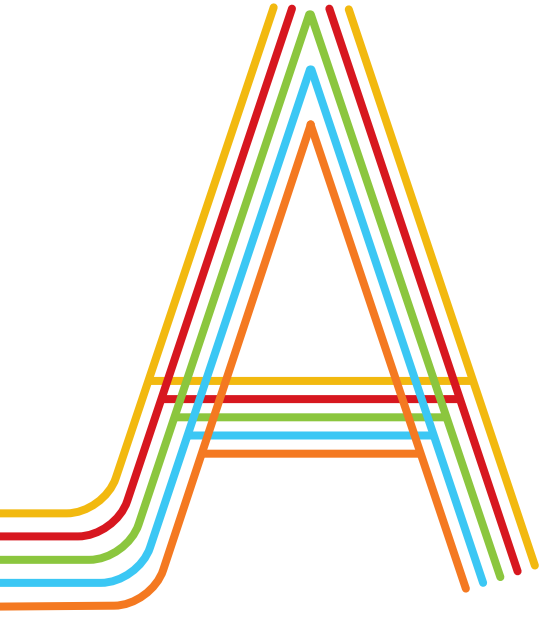
⏬ 🔽 ➖ 🔼 ⏫ WORSE BETTER | ✓ RECOMMENDED $ CR BEST BUY


hulu
THE CRITERION CHANNEL
TV
HBO max
prime video
Disney+
tv+
pluto tv
ROKU Channel
tubi

WATCH WHAT YOU REALLY WANT FOR LESS

We're spending more than ever on streaming services like Amazon Prime, Hulu, and Netflix—on top of our monthly cable bills. Read on for all the ways to save while still seeing your favorite shows, movies, and sports.

BY JAMES K. WILLCOX



ARE YOU LOOKING for ways to save money? If you haven't checked lately, you may be surprised at how much you're spending on TV streaming services every month. That's what happened to my wife and me recently when we reviewed our expenses.

Once we went through our credit card statements, we discovered that we were paying for monthly subscriptions to nine separate video services, including Amazon Prime, Hulu, and Netflix. The total bill was around $50 a month, or almost $600 a year—on top of the $1,920 we pay annually for our satellite TV service, which we have instead of cable.

We're not alone. Almost a quarter of all American households subscribe to nine or more streaming video services, in addition to any cable plan they have, according to market research firm Parks Associates. Half subscribe to four or more streaming services.

Those numbers rose sharply over the past few years, as many of the country's largest media companies launched their own streaming services featuring popular original content, and stopped licensing shows and movies to services like Amazon Prime and Netflix. That shift means that the Marvel and "Star Wars" movies you used to watch on Netflix are now available only with a Disney+ subscription and that you have to subscribe to Apple TV+ to watch "The Morning Show" and "Severance." Fans of "Stranger Things" still need Netflix, and you'll have to add HBO Max to see "House of the Dragon," the highly anticipated prequel to "Game of Thrones."

Before too long, it's easy to lose track of all the services you've subscribed to and are paying for. My wife and I had totally forgotten about some of our subscriptions. For instance, we got a free year of Apple TV+ when I bought a new iPad. When we checked our bills, we discovered that the free period had ended long before and we'd been paying $5 a month for the service, even though we hadn't watched anything on Apple TV+ since the last season of "Ted Lasso." That was a waste.

Fortunately, there are easy ways to simplify the confusing and expensive mess that streaming services can become—and save a lot of money on TV entertainment. The strategies in this article will help you create a great plan for getting most of the shows you want to watch at a price you can afford.

DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT CABLE

Before we dig into streaming services, let's first look at cable, which is still probably the biggest chunk of your monthly home entertainment bill.

My wife and I considered canceling our DirecTV satellite service but decided to keep it because it's one way for her to see Every Single Yankees Game. You may likewise find that a traditional cable (or satellite) package is the best way to get all the network TV you want. However, other options could be much cheaper.

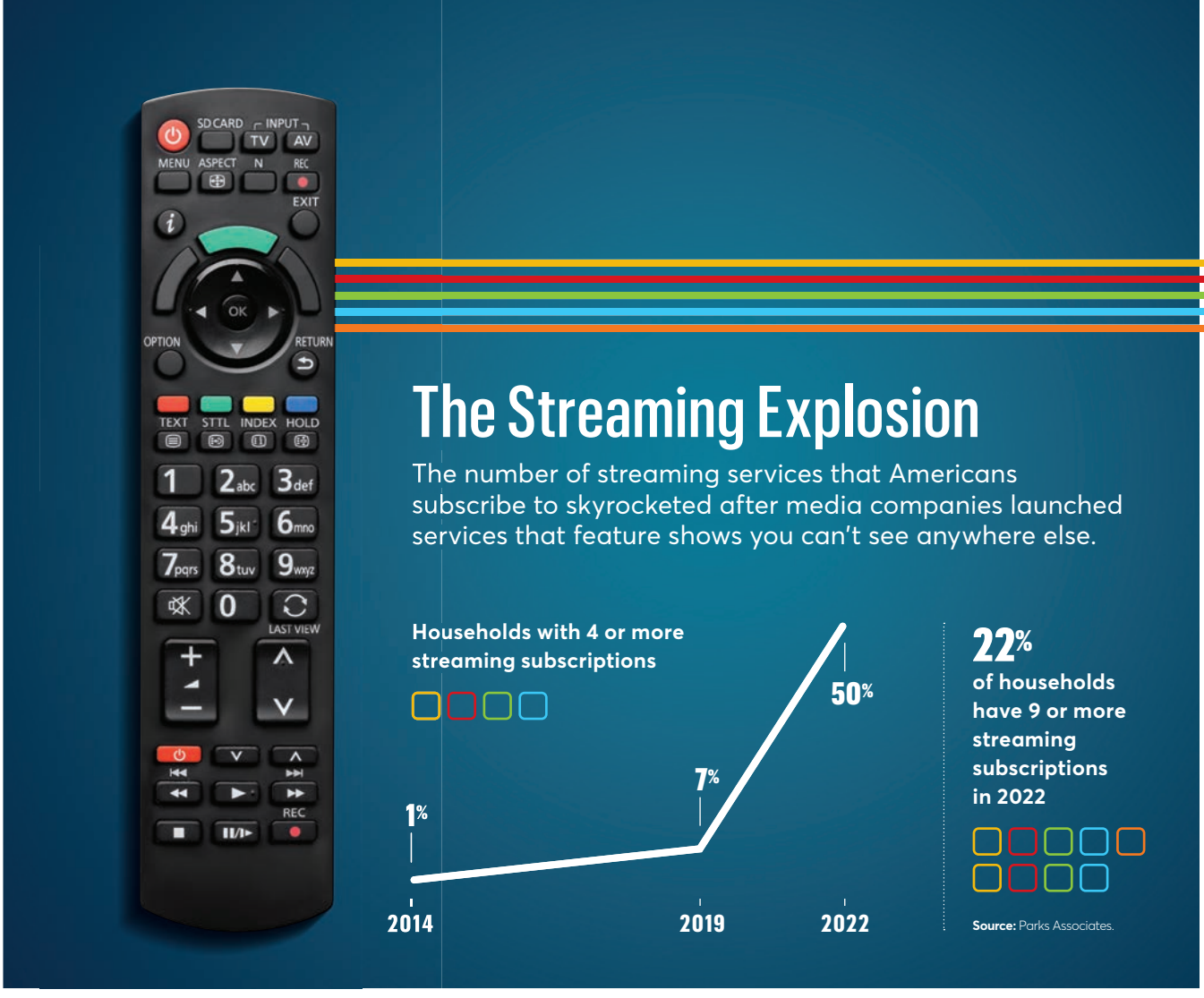
The least pricey approach of all is to use an inexpensive indoor antenna. If you live in or near a city, it might let you receive all the traditional networks, including local broadcasts, for free.

With good reception, an indoor antenna will get ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC, plus PBS, Telemundo, and dozens of digital subchannels that have been added over the past 20 years. CR has tested good antennas selling for as little as $20. Just check the return policy, in case it turns out you have poor reception in your home.

If an antenna won't work for you, consider using a cable replacement service. It may be cheaper than your cable plan and give you much of the same programming. Cable replacement services stream over the internet, just like Netflix, but they carry local networks and many other stations found on cable. Prices for these services—Hulu + Live TV, YouTube TV, and some others—have been rising, but they may still be cheaper than a cable or satellite package. See "Lose the Cable, Not the Shows," on page 31, for details.

FIND OUT WHICH SERVICES YOU'RE PAYING FOR

After you've settled the cable question, it's time to start making a list of every streaming service you subscribe to. This might be as simple as scrolling through



PHOTO, PREVIOUS SPREAD: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS. PHOTO, THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

the apps on your TV, but be sure to double check your credit card bills, too.

To make it easier to keep track of all your streaming subscriptions, consider moving them to one credit card. Another option is to subscribe to your streaming services through your Amazon, Apple TV+, or Roku account, so the billing is all in one place. Then, each month, review every service you're paying for and determine whether you're still using it enough to justify the cost. This can also help you catch any price hikes.

Once you've made a comprehensive list of your streaming services, it might be easy to eliminate some of them. For instance, if you subscribed last year to a niche service such as BroadwayHD, for $12 a month, just to watch "42nd Street," you can probably let that one go.

But what about the big services–like Apple TV+, HBO Max, and Hulu–which periodically introduce really great shows that people talk about for months? There's a solution for that.

SAVE MONEY BY SERVICE HOPPING

Many people sign up for streaming services to watch a particular series and then continue to subscribe even after they've finished every episode. It just becomes part of their monthly expenses, like a utility bill. But that's unnecessary.

Because these services don't require contracts, you can join Disney+ to host a "Star Wars" binge party, then quit until it releases another season of "The Mandalorian," possibly this winter. That will save you $8 a month. Or if you subscribed to Apple TV+ only to watch "Ted Lasso" and you've made it through season two, you can cancel the service and sign up again when the new season is available.

This isn't a novel idea: Thirty-six percent of streaming customers are already "service hoppers," who subscribed to streaming services, switched, then resubscribed multiple times over a period of 12 months, according to a Parks Associates study. And don't worry about missing out: Websites like JustWatch and Reelgood let you keep track of when the shows you want to see become available, so you can sign up just as the new season begins.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 30]

WHAT'S YOUR STREAMING

BARGAIN HUNTER

THE CHALLENGE: Cord-cutters can spend loads to get local stations and all the popular cable channels, plus enough streaming services to see lots of original series. You want to stay under $30 a month.

THE SOLUTION:

AN INDOOR ANTENNA — $0

You can receive over-the-air local broadcasts of major networks including ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, and Telemundo free with an indoor antenna. (Antennas cost as little as $20 to purchase, but you'll need to be in or near a city for the best reception.)

PHILO STREAMING SERVICE — $25

Adding Philo to your viewing mix gives you access to more than 60 lifestyle cable networks (A&E, AMC, Food Network, HGTV, etc.) and a DVR function that enables you to record shows, so you never have to miss an episode.

FREE AD-SUPPORTED STREAMING VIDEO SERVICES — $0

You can choose from among many ad-supported streaming services that offer older shows and movies and some original content at no cost (see "Thousands of Shows for Free," on page 32.)

TOTAL MONTHLY COST: $25

MOVIE LOVER

THE CHALLENGE: True cinephiles are hard to please, but this lineup should come very close.

THE SOLUTION:

AMAZON PRIME — $11.58*

This streaming staple offers classic and newer movies, as well as big-budget originals like "My Policeman."

NETFLIX — $15.49

Another streaming staple to deepen your library of classics, newer movies, and big-budget originals such as "Don't Look Up."

THE CRITERION CHANNEL — $8.33*

Has an extensive, curated library of classic and rare films and documentaries from around the world.

FANDOR — $4.17*

Features thousands of international classics, independent films, and documentaries.

DISNEY+ BUNDLE — $14

Offers a formidable film library, Hulu's licensed and original ("The Princess") movies, and ESPN+.

KANOPY OR HOOPLA — $0

Available through many libraries, these services offer classics, foreign films, and documentaries free.

TOTAL MONTHLY COST: $54**

PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: MAXIMUM FILM/ALAMY STOCK; ALAMY STOCK; VH1; 20TH CENTURY FOX/KOBAL/SHUTTERSTOCK; SILVERSCREEN/ALAMY STOCK; MAXIMUM FILM/ALAMY STOCK (2); PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK; ALAMY STOCK; UNIVERSAL TELEVISION/ALBUM/ALAMY STOCK; SHONDALAND/ALBUM/ALAMY STOCK; ALAMY STOCK; GETTY IMAGES(3)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GLUEKIT

STYLE?

Cancel your cable package and you can still watch lots of great TV by putting together the right combination of streaming services. It all depends on what you're looking for. Classic movies? College football? A little of everything? Here are four sample combinations, with prices, to help you get started. Mix and match, or add other streaming services, to create your perfect lineup.

'I WANT IT ALL' VIEWER

THE CHALLENGE: Stream local channels and loads of cable networks, plus must-see original shows and movies. In other words: just about everything.

THE SOLUTION:

YOUTUBE TV/HULU + LIVE TV — $65/$70

Either of these can reasonably replicate what you'd get with a traditional cable TV plan, including local broadcasts, cable channels, and a cloud DVR. Hulu + Live TV includes Disney+ and ESPN+; YouTube TV has more channels, including more major sports networks.

APPLE TV+ — $4.17*

Offers a growing list of compelling originals ("CODA," "Ted Lasso") and is starting to make more deals for sports, including MLB and soccer.

HBO MAX — $12.50*

Has high-profile originals ("House of the Dragon," "Succession"), as well as recent theatrical hits.

NETFLIX — $15.49

Offers tons of licensed content and original ("Bridgerton," "Stranger Things") shows.

PARAMOUNT+ AND PEACOCK PREMIUM — $8.34*

Paramount+ and Peacock Premium, both $4.17, let you access a vast library of CBS and NBC network shows, plus a growing selection of original programming.

TOTAL MONTHLY COST: **$106/$111****

SPORTS FANATIC

THE CHALLENGE: These days, games in several sports are spread across multiple streaming services. To watch all the action in the NFL this season, for example, you'd need at least three subscriptions.

THE SOLUTION:

DIRECTV STREAM CHOICE — $90

It's pricey, but this plan gives you all your local channels, cable networks that carry sports (ESPN, TBS, TNT), the largest assortment of regional sports channels of any service, and a DVR, so you can record.

AMAZON PRIME — $11.58*

Amazon Prime gets you "Thursday Night Football," and you can pay more to add sports channels like MLB.TV, NBA League Pass, and PGA golf.

NFL+ — $2.50*

A new service, NFL+ provides all live out-of-market preseason games, plus live game audio and access to the NFL Film archives. (Live local and prime-time games can be watched only on phones and tablets.)

Note: *You can put together a similar package for other sports, from basketball to soccer.*

TOTAL MONTHLY COST: **$104****

*Price based on annual subscription. Ad-supported plans may be available for less. Monthly plans are also available at higher cost. **Total monthly cost has been rounded to the nearest dollar.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27]

CHOOSE A CHEAPER TIER

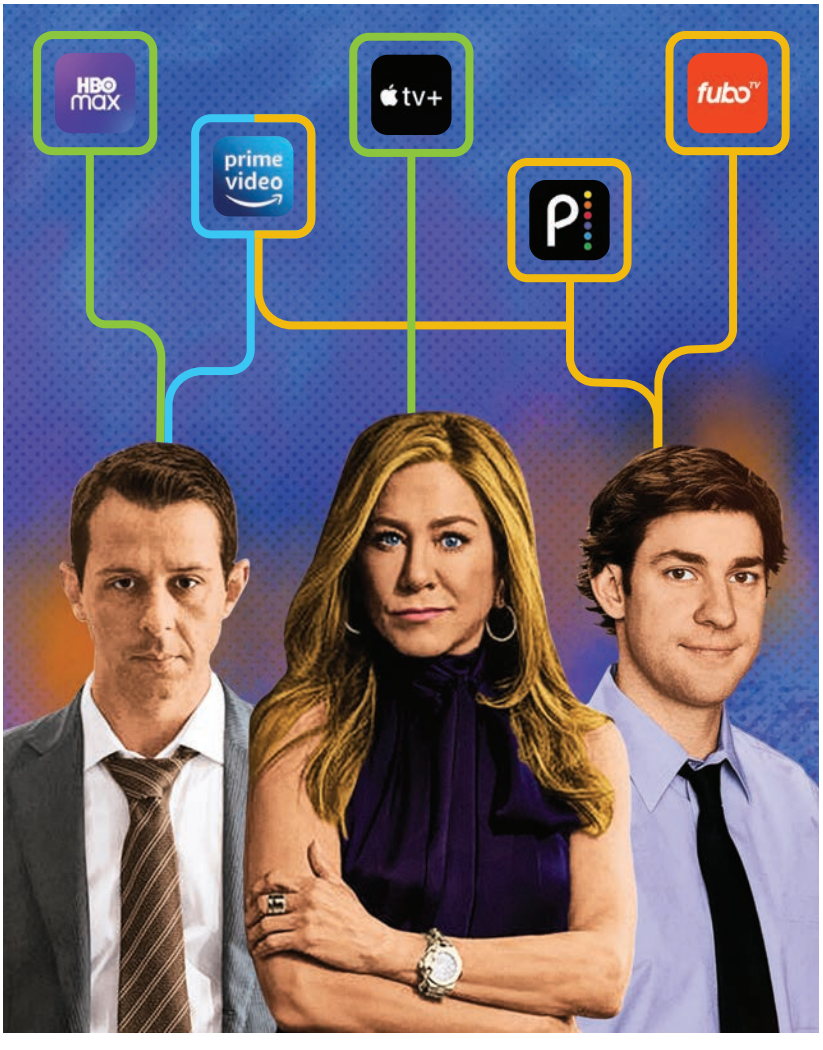
Not long ago, streaming services each offered just one pricing option. Now many companies have added cheaper plans, where the shows come with commercials. That's a good way to save money, especially when streaming services raise their prices. For example, in my household we subscribe to the ad-supported versions of Hulu and Paramount+. Hulu is raising its rates across the board in October. It's going from $7 to $8 a month for ad-supported viewing, but we'll still be saving $7 off the ad-free version. HBO Max also has an ad-supported option, and Disney+ says it's launching one in December.

STREAM SHOWS AND MOVIES FOR FREE

Many great shows and movies, such as "Mad Men" and "The Green Mile," are available on free streaming services like Freevee, Pluto TV, and Tubi. These services have original content, too. In exchange for watching, you'll have to put up with some ads. (See "Thousands of Shows for Free," on page 32.)

In addition, you might be able to take advantage of free promotions on paid services. First, look for any deals offered by your cell phone carrier. For instance, you can get HBO Max free with several unlimited plans from AT&T, or Netflix with most Magenta plans offered by T-Mobile.

Apple offers its own promotions. As of this summer, the company was providing three months of Apple TV+ at no charge if you bought a new iPhone, iPad, Apple TV, or Mac. If you take advantage of promotions like this one, be sure to enter the end date of the free period on your calendar in case you want to cancel before you start getting charged.



SHARE LOG-INS (WITHIN REASON)

Most streaming services expect some degree of log-in sharing. Just don't go overboard. It's probably fine to let your daughter keep using your log-in when she moves to her first apartment, but Netflix might look askance at your sharing accounts with all 10 members of your book club.

That wouldn't work well, anyway. Most services limit the number of people who can access the service at any one time, so if you share your account too widely, you might not be able to use it when you want to.

A few services, including Netflix, offer plans that let you pay more to allow more people stream at a time. (Netflix Premium, which allows four users at a time, costs $20 a month, about $5 more than the company's two-user Standard plan.)

The company could become stricter

PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: ALAMY STOCK (2); PICTURELUX/THE HOLLYWOOD ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK

ILLUSTRATION BY GLUEKIT

LOSE THE CABLE, NOT THE SHOWS

Ready to quit cable but not major networks like ABC, NBC, and CBS? These services stream network shows and other programming over the internet to your TV and might offer everything you want for less than you're paying for cable.

DirecTV Stream

$70-$150 PER MONTH FOR FEATURED PLANS

DirecTV Stream requires no dish and gives you more than 75 live TV channels in the basic plan, plus on-demand titles. The Choice plan, $90 a month, includes regional sports networks and the MLB and NBA sports leagues; the priciest Premier plan, $150 a month, comes with HBO Max, Cinemax, Showtime, and Starz. All plans come with a cloud DVR with unlimited storage for nine months.

FuboTV

$70-$100 PER MONTH

This is a cable-style streaming service for sports fans. The base plan has about 130 channels with local stations in most markets, plus lots of sports networks and many cable channels (though not Turner channels CNN, TBS, TCM, or TNT). Stepping up to the Elite plan, $80, gets you Fubo Extra, with 42 more sports and lifestyle channels, plus more than 130 events in 4K. The Ultimate plan has even more channels, as well as Showtime and Sports Plus, which includes NFL RedZone. All the plans include a cloud DVR that lets you record and store 1,000 hours of programming.

Hulu + Live TV

$70 PER MONTH WITH ADS, $76 WITHOUT

Hulu + Live TV is a good option for people who want both local channels and cable networks. In addition to everything in Hulu's $7-per-month streaming library, you get Disney+ and ESPN+ at no extra charge. All told, you receive 75-plus live and on-demand channels, including the major local broadcast networks. TV shows are available the day after they air from most major networks, excluding NBC. You also get movies and a growing number of Hulu originals, including "The Bear" and "Only Murders in the Building." You can add premium networks and pay more to get add-ons for more sports and entertainment channels. For an additional $10 a month, you can watch on unlimited screens at home and up to three outside the home on mobile devices. The service includes a cloud DVR with unlimited storage.

Sling TV

$35-$50 PER MONTH

An option for cord-cutters on a budget, Sling TV offers two $35 plans—Sling Orange, with about 30 channels (including ESPN but no local channels), and Sling Blue, with a different mix of about 40 channels. The Blue plan includes Fox and NBC—but not ABC, CBS, or ESPN. For $50 a month you get a plan that combines both. You can pay extra for additional theme-based channel packs (sports, kids, etc.). All plans include a cloud DVR with 50 hours of storage that you can bump up to 200 hours for an extra $5 per month.

YouTube TV

$65 PER MONTH

YouTube TV is a solid option for anyone looking to save money without giving up sports or major cable channels. It provides 85-plus channels, including the major broadcast networks, cable channels, major sports networks such as CBS Sports, ESPN, and Fox Sports, along with the MLB, NBA, and NFL league networks. It also has a few regional sports networks. A cloud DVR with unlimited storage is included, and you can add premium channels like Acorn TV and Starz for an extra charge. A 4K Plus add-on lets you watch videos in 4K, enjoy unlimited simultaneous streams at home, and view recordings offline on a mobile device.

in the future, though. Netflix recently started charging users in Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru an extra $2 to $3 to share passwords outside of their households. So far, the company hasn't suggested that it might extend that policy to the U.S.

SUBSCRIBE TO NETWORKS DIRECTLY

In a number of the previous strategies, we presented ways to get the cable networks you want–through a cable package, an antenna, or a cable replacement service. Here's one more alternative.

Let's say the network you watch most is NBC. These days, you can sign up for NBC's streaming network, Peacock, where shows appear a day after they air on live TV. If you're willing to wait that day, this can save you from paying for a bloated plan with loads of channels you never watch. CBS has its own version, Paramount+. In addition to the regular shows you'd find on those networks, you'll get some streaming-only shows. For example, Paramount+ has several "Star Trek" series and is getting the reboot of "Frasier," starring Kelsey Grammer. Peacock's original shows include "The Resort" and "Yellowstone."

And remember, you can jump into and out of these services, too. My wife and I recently signed up for one month of Peacock to watch "Downton Abbey: A New Era." It cost us $5 (with ads), a great deal because at the time, it would have cost $20 to watch the movie on a pay-per-view service.

THOUSANDS OF SHOWS FOR FREE

Free, ad-supported streaming services have typically shown only older movies and TV series. But that's starting to change: Many free streaming services now have newer programs and movies, plus original shows. Meanwhile, some paid services have launched scaled-down free versions.

Amazon Freevee

Previously called IMDb TV, Freevee offers a mix of live channels, on-demand classic TV shows and movies, and some original content. Watch "Lost" and "Mad Men," or classics such as "All in the Family" and "Bewitched." Newer movies, such as "Emma," live alongside original shows like "Judy Justice," starring Judge Judy Sheindlin, and "Bosch: Legacy."

Peacock

Paid versions of Peacock have more content, but the free tier still gives you plenty: about two-thirds of Peacock's 20,000-title content library, plus live channels. Popular shows include "Law & Order: Organized Crime" and several seasons of "The Office." Other NBC broadcasts are available a week after they air.

Pluto TV

Pluto TV, owned by Paramount, has about 250 curated channels, drawing content from Paramount properties (BET, CBS, Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon, and Paramount Pictures), plus networks such as AMC, Bloomberg, Cheddar News, CNN, Fox Sports, and NBC News Now. It also has a decent library of on-demand content.

Roku Channel

The Roku Channel has a rapidly expanding assortment of content, including Roku originals such as "Reno 911! Defunded." New food series are coming from Martha Stewart and Emeril Lagasse, and a deal with Lionsgate gives Roku the exclusive rights to stream the studio's theatrically released films—after they premiere on Starz.

Tubi

Tubi, owned by Fox, has more than 40,000 titles, including selections from the libraries of Fox, Lionsgate, MGM, Paramount, and Warner Bros., plus networks including A&E and Lifetime. Original content includes "War of the Worlds: Annihilation." You can see news from ABC, Black News Channel, CBS, Bloomberg TV, Fox, Fubo Sports Network, and NBC News Now, among others.

MAKE SURE YOUR INTERNET IS UP TO SPEED

IF YOUR INTERNET seems slow, first figure out how much broadband you really need. Netflix and other streaming companies say your internet service needs download speeds of at least 5 megabits per second to stream high-definition shows and movies; you'll need 15 to 25 Mbps to stream 4K videos. Homes with multiple active streamers could need internet service that provides at least 50-Mbps download speeds for everyone to watch on separate devices at the same time. You can measure your home's download speeds at speedtest.net.

If your broadband speed is satisfactory, there are other reasons you may be experiencing slow service. One culprit might be an older modem or router. If you have spotty WiFi reception in your home, try moving the router to a more central location. Also move it away from obstructions, such as walls and ceilings, and avoid placing the router in a closet or cabinet.

If you think your wireless connection is to blame, try using a wired connection to see whether performance improves. Another way to isolate WiFi problems is to run a speed test with your computer connected via Ethernet directly to your modem or cable box, before the connection reaches your router. Compare these speed test results with those you get connecting via WiFi.

PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: NVIDIA; ROKU; AMAZON

The Top-Rated Streaming Devices

Even if your TV has built-in streaming capability, a dedicated streaming device may be more powerful and easier to use.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results					
			Picture quality	Ease of use	Features	Data privacy	Data security	Built-in voice search
4K STREAMING MEDIA DEVICES								
✓ **Nvidia** Shield TV Pro	82	$200	⏫	🔼	⏫	➖	➖	●
✓ **Nvidia** Shield TV	77	$150	⏫	🔼	⏫	➖	➖	●
$ **Roku** Ultra (2022)	73	$80	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔽	➖	●
$ **Roku** Streaming Stick 4K+	73	$70	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔽	🔽	●
$ **Amazon** Fire TV Stick 4K Max	73	$55	⏫	➖	⏫	➖	➖	●
✓ **Amazon** Fire TV Cube (2nd Gen.)	70	$120	⏫	➖	⏫	➖	➖	●
$ **Amazon** Fire TV Stick 4K	69	$50	⏫	➖	⏫	➖	➖	●
$ **Roku** Streaming Stick 4K	68	$50	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔽	●
$ **Google** Chromecast with Google TV	67	$40	⏫	➖	⏫	➖	🔼	●
✓ **Apple** TV 4K (32GB, 2021)	66	$180	⏫	➖	⏫	➖	🔼	●
$ **Roku** Express 4K+	65	$40	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔽	➖	●
$ **TiVo** Stream 4K	62	$40	⏫	➖	🔼	🔽	➖	●
Onn Android TV UHD Streaming Device	53	$20	⏫	➖	➖	➖	🔼	●
Anker Nebula 4K Streaming Dongle	53	$50	⏫	➖	➖	🔽	🔽	●
Roku Premiere	49	$35	⏫	➖	➖	🔽	➖	

› All Access and Digital members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/streaming.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on performance of the product in all our tests. **Picture quality** includes image clarity and color accuracy. **Ease of use** reflects whether it's simple to perform tasks. **Features** covers factors like playing media files. **Data privacy** and **data security** cover privacy policies, data encryption, and more.

The New World of Cooking Oils

Avocado oil? Coconut oil? Ghee? All the health intel about what's out there and when to use them, too.

by Jennifer Cook

PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN GOLDSTEIN

Move over, canola and extra-virgin olive oil—supermarkets are now brimming with an ever-expanding repertory of oils to cook with: grapeseed, avocado, toasted sesame, ghee, and many more. The variety is wonderful, but what the heck do you actually use them all for? And are they good for you?

Some of the messages about the health benefits and drawbacks of certain oils can be confusing. Coconut oil, for instance, has soared in popularity in recent years, with its proponents making unproven claims that it can do everything from sparking weight loss to preventing Alzheimer's. On the other end of the spectrum, there's a hashtag making the rounds on social media—#seedoilfree—referring to the mistaken idea that seed oils like sunflower and canola oil are toxic.

And then there's the question of price. At Stopandshop.com, for example, you can pay $5.79 for a 14-ounce jar of Nature's Promise Organic Refined Coconut Oil or $10.99 for the same amount of Spectrum Organic Virgin Cold-Pressed Unrefined Coconut Oil—almost twice as much, ounce for ounce. All prices, even at the "basic" end of the oil spectrum, have hit record highs in the past two years because of factors including the invasion of Ukraine, labor shortages, drought in some parts of the world, and too-wet weather in others, says Mintak Joo, a senior research analyst at Gro Intelligence, an agriculture data platform.

In short, a once simple shopping choice has become fairly complicated. But choosing and using (and saving on) cooking oil doesn't have to ratchet up your stress levels or harm your health. Here's the science-backed, dietitian-approved, recipe-friendly skinny on cooking oil.

What's a Cooking Oil, Anyway?

Cooking oil starts out as the natural oil found inside a wide variety of plants: seeds (such as soybean, sunflower, sesame, safflower, and grapeseed); fruits (palm, olive, and avocado); grains (corn and wheat germ); and nuts (walnut, pecan, hazelnut, and others). "Vegetable" oil is usually soybean oil or a blend of oils like soybean and canola.

This natural oil is squeezed from the plant using mechanical methods, such as putting the seeds or fruit through a press known as an expeller. Manufacturers also may use chemical solvents and high heat to extract the oil, or a combination of mechanical and chemical methods. Many oils are then "refined," using more chemicals and high temperatures. This step removes impurities and helps create oil with a more uniform color, a more neutral taste, and better shelf stability.

Refining has a downside: Exposure to high heat can destroy some of an oil's nutrients, such as antioxidant polyphenols, says Dariush Mozaffarian, MD, the Dean for Policy at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University.

Some mass-produced oils may have antioxidants added back in after processing, but for a more nutrient-rich oil, look for the word "unrefined" on the label, or "cold-pressed," which indicates that the oil was pressed at a temperature no greater than 120° F. And choose oils labeled "organic" if you'd like to avoid those that have been through chemical processing.

The Healthier Oils

Most oils contain roughly 120 calories and 14 grams of fat per tablespoon. But it's the type of fat in them that's most important. "What's really linked to [good] health is unsaturated fat that

PHOTO, PREVIOUS SPREAD: PROP STYLING: MIAKO KATOH. FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM

comes from plant oils and plant fats," Mozaffarian says.

Fortunately, most cooking oils are high in unsaturated fats, with a combination of monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and saturated fats, albeit in different proportions. Those proportions matter, because while monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats have been linked to a lower risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and stroke, saturated fats have been shown to raise blood levels of LDL "bad" cholesterol. (High levels can cause artery blockages that may lead to heart attacks and strokes.)

Olive oil is a great choice due to its high levels of good monounsaturated fats, antioxidant polyphenols, low amount of saturated fat, and vitamins like E and K. In fact, studies have shown that consuming olive oil can help lower the risk of cardiovascular disease, several types of cancer, and death from all causes.

"Two other oils for good health are canola oil and soybean oil," Mozaffarian says. Both have ample amounts of polyunsaturated fats and omega-3 and omega-6, which are essential fats that you can get only through your diet.

To limit saturated fat (the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest keeping it to less than 10 percent of your daily calories), you'll want to use a light hand with coconut oil, butter, and ghee.

Quick tip: If a fat is solid at room temperature (think: butter, ghee, unrefined coconut oil), it's mostly saturated. If it's liquid, like a majority of cooking oils, it's mostly unsaturated.

The Right Oils to Cook With

Every oil has a specific smoke point, the temperature at which it begins to smoke and burn. Try to fry with an oil that has a low smoke point–like walnut oil–and you could end up with a smoky (and possibly very dangerous) mess.

And then there's flavor. Some cooking oils have a neutral one that won't steal the spotlight from your other ingredients. Others assert themselves a little bit more, enlivening the taste of your dish.

A lot of the choice comes down to personal preference. But it's wise to keep a few essentials on hand: an olive oil for sautéing, dressings, dipping, and drizzling; canola or soybean for stir-frying, deep-frying, and baking; coconut oil for dairy-free baking or when you want a mild tropical note; and plain or toasted sesame oil for stir-frying or adding aromatic flavor.

Most oils should be stored in a dark glass bottle or container away from sunlight, but a few (noted on the pages that follow) are best refrigerated. Read on for more about the oils you're likely to find on grocery store shelves, with guidance from Monique Richard, MS, RDN, a national spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

3 Oils to Avoid

Processed foods often contain palm, palm kernel, and cottonseed oils. Palm oils—which resist oxidation, extending their shelf life—are found in many foods, including ice cream and pizza. Most home cooks in the U.S. use other oils, but palm oils are a staple in African and Asian kitchens. Cottonseed oil is used commercially to give spreads their creamy texture and lend rich flavor to fried foods (like potato chips). All three are high in saturated fat, so check the package label before you buy. And palm oil production raises environmental concerns. Organizations including the World Wildlife Fund say that certain methods are leading to deforestation, endangering species.

PHOTO: SAM KAPLAN/TRUNK ARCHIVE

Oils for Every Cooking Style

5 VERSATILE CHOICES

Coconut

38 to 75 cents per oz. for 14 oz.

Despite what you may have heard about coconut oil's health benefits, it has more total saturated fat than beef fat or butter. But it also has a unique, slightly tropical taste, a high smoke point (you can use it to sauté and fry), and can be a substitute for butter in dairy-free baking. Coconut oil can be pricey; soybean oil, which also has a high smoke point but less saturated fat, is a smart swap, though you'll lose some flavor.

Canola

30 to 40 cents per oz. for 32 oz.

Canola, a type of seed oil, is high in monounsaturated fats. One review of studies found that it can lower total and "bad" LDL cholesterol and insulin resistance (a tolerance to insulin that makes the hormone less effective). With a medium-high smoke point, it's great for oven cooking, baking, and stir-frying, and its neutral flavor won't compete with the other ingredients in a dish.

Sesame

60 cents per oz. for 10 to 16 oz.

Plain sesame seed oil has a high smoke point, a light color, and a fairly neutral taste, making it a good all-purpose oil. Toasted sesame oil looks much darker and has a lower smoke point and a more intense flavor brought out by the seeds having been toasted before the oil was pressed. It adds a complex, almost smoky dimension to food. Drizzle it over stir-fries, add it to noodles or soups, or whisk it into vinaigrettes or hummus. Sesame oil can become rancid quickly, so store it in the fridge.

Soybean

9 cents per oz. for 32 oz.

Like other oils that are high in poly- and monounsaturated fats, soybean oil (sometimes labeled as vegetable oil at the store) has been linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Its mild taste and high smoke point make it good for high-heat cooking, such as roasting, frying, and sautéing, as well as baking. You can use it in recipes instead of olive or canola oil.

Olive

28 to 70 cents per oz. for 25 oz.

It's an all-around health winner and versatile, too. Extra-virgin olive oil (often abbreviated as EVOO) is unrefined, thus best for your health, deepest in color, and most flavorful, with a pungent, almost peppery taste. It also has the lowest smoking point, so it's ideal for salad dressings and dips, and drizzling over bean, grain, or pasta dishes. But it's not as good for high-heat frying. If a bottle is just labeled "olive oil," it can contain a blend of refined and virgin olive oils, which isn't as beneficial or richly flavored as EVOO. But the higher smoke point makes it better for searing, browning, grilling, sautéing, and stir-frying veggies or meat. Refined olive oils may also be described as "light," "fresh," or "premium" on their label.

PHOTO: BEN GOLDSTEIN. PROP STYLING: MIAKO KATOH. FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM

The best ones to choose for sautéing, roasting, baking, drizzling, dressings, and more.

PLUS 8 MORE TO USE

Avocado

45 to 80 cents per oz. for 16.9 oz.

Rich in monounsaturated fats, this mellow, versatile oil can take high heat for sautéing, roasting, stir-frying, and frying, and it's suited to both sweet and savory dishes. Try brushing it on vegetables before grilling, or making popcorn with it. It's pricey, so know that you can swap in another neutral oil.

Sunflower

18 cents per oz. for 48 oz.

Like other seed oils (see canola, grapeseed, safflower, and sesame) sunflower seed oil is high in beneficial omega-6. Contrary to social media reports, omega-6 in these oils isn't thought to increase inflammation or cause other harm. It has an unassuming taste, and its high smoke point is a match for stir-frying, grilling, and deep-frying.

Safflower

24 cents per oz. for 32 oz.

Another seed oil that can take the heat, safflower's neutral flavor makes it a good match for many dishes and cooking techniques, including baking, stir-frying, sautéing, and deep-frying.

Grapeseed

25 to 30 cent per oz. for 24 oz.

Made from the seeds left over from wine production, grapeseed oil has a high smoke point and a nondistinctive flavor that lets other ingredients shine. Use it for baking, roasting, and stir-frying—say, onions, garlic, or other veggies for an entrée. It can be replaced in recipes with another neutral-flavored, high-smoke-point oil like safflower.

Walnut

56 cents per oz. for 16 oz.

High in unsaturated fats and low in saturated fat, walnut oil is also a good source of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), a type of omega-3 fatty acid found in plants. Its low smoke point makes it best for no-cook foods like dips and dressings, where its rich, nutty flavor can stand out. Keep refrigerated to prevent rancidity.

Hazelnut

$1.29 per oz. for 8.5 oz.

This high-monounsaturated, aromatic oil can tolerate medium-high heat. Use it in baked goods or add it to savory sautéed dishes and vinaigrettes. It's best kept refrigerated.

Butter

24 to 35 cents per oz. for 16 oz.

Butter gives a distinctive, comforting lift to cooked and baked dishes of all kinds. It has a fairly low smoke point. But it's high in saturated fat, so keep that in mind when you're looking at recipes, and consider replacing some or all of the butter with a healthier oil, like olive or canola. Refrigerate it, or store it in the freezer for several months.

Ghee

70 cents to $1.10 per oz. for 12 oz.

Made by heating butter until the water evaporates and then removing the milk solids, ghee is a staple of Indian cooking. It hasn't been found to have any health benefits over regular butter, but it does have a higher smoke point, so it won't burn as quickly when you sauté with it. Store it in an air-tight container; it can be refrigerated.

Note: All prices were provided by G. Henry Mellet and the Strategic Resource Group.

Are Pricey Oils Really Worth the Money?

YOU MIGHT WONDER why one olive oil costs three times more than another when they're both labeled "extra virgin" and the bottles contain the same amount. Or why some types of oils are so much more expensive than standbys like canola.

One big reason is that mechanical methods (like the expeller pressing used for cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil) are less efficient; they extract less oil from the plant. So producers have to start out with more raw materials, adding to the base cost. And walnut, almond, and avocado crops (and to a lesser degree, coconut) have been hit by drought and other challenges that affect the price of their oils.

When to use them? You can sauté your veggies in bargain olive oil just fine, but a cold-pressed artisanal olive oil might offer more nutrients or a more complex flavor that's worth splurging on (and perhaps using sparingly). Here's how to save if you'd like to use specialty oils.

- **Buy private label or store brands.** They're not only better priced than brand-name cooking oils but also offer a quality that's often just as good. Examples: Wellsley Farms Organic for BJ's Wholesale Club, Kirkland Signature for Costco, Great Value for Walmart, and Good & Gather for Target.

- **Shop at stores where cooking oils are permanently discounted.** Prices at BJ's Wholesale Club, Costco, Kroger, Target, Trader Joe's, Walmart, and WinCo tend to be lower than at other stores that have cut or eliminated their usual promotional offers.

- **Buy in bulk or stock up on multiples of the same size.** But check best-by dates because oils should be used within 30 to 60 days after opening.

- **Time your purchases.** Cooking oils are typically discounted in stores during the first week of the month.

BOOK EXCERPT

Rocked by Danger

In her new book, "Buyer Aware," CR's president and CEO Marta L. Tellado tells how Consumer Reports uncovered the hidden deaths of nearly 100 babies due to a poorly regulated product and then fought to get it removed from the marketplace.

This article has been adapted from "Buyer Aware: Harnessing Our Consumer Power for a Safe, Fair, and Transparent Marketplace," by Marta L. Tellado. Copyright © 2022. Available from PublicAffairs, an imprint of Perseus Books, LLC, a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group.

Deadly Sleeper
Fisher-Price recalled all 4.7 million of its Rock 'n Play Sleepers after CR linked them to dozens of deaths.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS

Here's the good news: Consumers are actually much safer than they were at the turn of the twentieth century, thanks to decades of sustained determination by consumers and advocacy groups to pressure companies and governments to put consumer needs first.

But there is much more work to do, as Consumer Reports president and CEO Marta L. Tellado makes clear in her new book, "Buyer Aware: Harnessing Our Consumer Power for a Safe, Fair, and Transparent Marketplace" (PublicAffairs).

"Buyer Aware" shines a light on a wide range of high-stakes issues facing today's consumers, from the imperiled safety of the food we eat to the increasing challenge of keeping our personal data out of the hands of people who want to exploit it. The book also offers actionable advice, including ways to stay on top of the latest product recalls and reduce the amount of information being collected by tech platforms such as Facebook.

In "Buyer Aware," Tellado shares how her family's journey emigrating from Cuba to the U.S. when she was two years old helped spark her desire to work for organizations with missions focused on achieving civil rights, striving for economic fairness, and improving public safety. Tellado has been CR's president and CEO since 2014. ("Buyer Aware" will be released September 20 and can be preordered at **BuyerAware.CR.org,** with all proceeds going to support CR's work as a nonprofit.)

In the following excerpt, Tellado details just one of the consumer victories that CR has achieved in recent years: ridding the marketplace of dangerous infant sleepers.

Her story of CR's reporting and advocacy reveals that many products on store shelves that we assume have been deemed safe by government agencies have undergone no such approvals. In fact, 97 percent of Americans believe that products are tested for safety before they're shipped to stores, according to a July 2020 CR nationally representative survey of 2,031 U.S. adults. The truth is, relatively few are required to do so—even when their products are designed for use by children.

ONE UNIVERSAL TRUTH about newborn babies is that they don't sleep through the night. They're not supposed to. They need to eat.

Another is that babies' nighttime schedules will exhaust their parents in a soul-eroding way that feels as if it will last forever. I remember when my brother Val, as a new parent, would nod off in the middle of our conversations. That lasted several years, until his girls slept through the night. I tried not to take it personally.

So when the Fisher-Price Rock 'n Play Sleeper, an inclined vibrating and rocking seat for infants, burst onto the market in October 2009, parents like my brother heralded it as a lifesaver.

Brands like Fisher-Price have earned the trust of consumers over the course of decades. When I was a babysitter in the 1970s, nearly every family I worked for owned the company's family-farm playset, or its telephone pull toy. The brand was (and continues to be) everywhere that kids are. Generations of parents have almost come to view companies like Fisher-Price as friends. We don't expect friends to betray us.

In 2008, when Fisher-Price toy designer Linda Chapman came up with the blueprint for the Rock 'n Play Sleeper, she had no experience with products aimed at infants, but drew on her own days as the mother of an infant son kept awake by reflux. Her design had children reclining at a 30-degree angle on a frame with a restraint harness and sidewalls, and a head support made of soft bedding. At that angle, Chapman figured, reflux wouldn't bother infants, while the rocking motion would lull them to sleep so Mom and Dad could get a break.

Unfortunately, Chapman and her employer didn't heed a 1994 directive from the American Academy of Pediatrics that babies should sleep alone on their backs on a firm, flat surface free

of soft bedding and restraints. Babies' heads are too heavy for their developing necks to control, the pediatricians said, and when they sleep on an incline their heads can loll forward or to the side and block their windpipes. As for reflux, pediatric gastroenterologists say that sleeping on an incline doesn't help and can actually worsen the condition.

Even so, Mattel's hazard-analysis team didn't sound the alarm. No pediatricians with sleep expertise were consulted. Fisher-Price marketed the Rock 'n Play Sleeper in ads and on the packaging as suitable for all-night sleep, but did no testing to prove it was safe for that purpose. The thirty-degree angle they chose for the product was based on a hunch.

Less than a year after the Rock 'n Play Sleeper went on sale, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the federal agency responsible for policing dangerous products, created new standards based on medical recommendations that set a maximum incline of ten degrees for bassinets. Instead of recalling the Rock 'n Play Sleeper, with its thirty-degree angle, Fisher-Price asked the agency to create a new category for sleepers like the Rock 'n Play so the new bassinet rules wouldn't apply to the Rock 'n Play. The agency complied. So the key feature that made the product unsafe, its angle, became the very thing that essentially exempted it from government safety standards.

Policymakers in other countries took a distinctly different approach. In 2011, the Australian government said the Rock 'n Play couldn't be sold there because of asphyxiation danger. Soon after, the British Royal College of Midwives told Fisher-Price that it wouldn't endorse the product as a sleeper because it was suitable only for short periods of supervised wakefulness. Canada permitted the product to be marketed only as the Rock 'n Play Soothing Seat rather than as a sleeper.

Lives Cut Short

Below are three of the nearly 100 infants whose deaths have been tied to Fisher-Price Rock 'n Play Sleepers.

Alex Thompson
Died September 23, 2011

Alice Bertola
Died January 5, 2017

Emma Richter
Died August 15, 2018

Warnings Ignored

Meanwhile, doctors in the U.S. raised alarms. When a Georgia pediatrician called and wrote to Fisher-Price in February 2013 to warn that the product was unsafe for infant sleep, the company emailed back that "the Rock 'n Play Sleeper complies with all applicable standards." In fact, there were no standards to comply with at the time: The Rock 'n Play Sleeper no longer qualified as a bassinet, so it didn't need to adhere to bassinet standards, and the new "inclined sleeper" category wouldn't officially be created until 2015. And litigation later revealed that the company knew in 2018 that the sleeper had been linked to at least fourteen infant deaths.

As the Rock 'n Play's popularity grew, the number of related deaths mounted, among them a two-month-old girl in Hidalgo County, Texas, found on her back in the sleeper with her chin on her shoulder, her airway cut off; a two-month-old boy in Jacksonville, Florida, discovered with blood coming out of his nose and mouth after a nap in his sleeper; and a three-month-old boy in Leesville, Louisiana, found with cheeks cold, pacifier in mouth, not breathing.

Sara Thompson, of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, told the CPSC in December 2012 that her son Alex (pictured, at top left) had died in the Rock 'n Play Sleeper in September 2011. The agency passed the information to Fisher-Price's risk-management team, which documented the incident as an "injury flag."

Some babies, like five-month-old Ezra Overton of Alexandria, Virginia, were found dead on their bellies after rolling over in the Rock 'n Play. He'd been put to sleep on his back one evening shortly before Christmas 2017 and was found in the middle of the night with his face pressed against the sleeper's padding. "He was blue, and his body was, it was hard,

PHOTOS, FROM TOP, COURTESY OF: SARA THOMPSON; DALLAS AND SARAH BERTOLA; ERIKA RICHTER

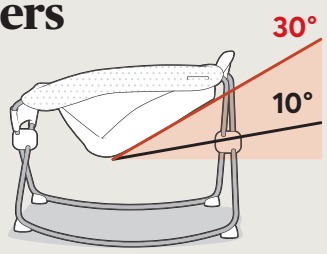
and he didn't feel real," said Ezra's dad, Keenan Overton.

As the death toll rose, Fisher-Price declined to pull its product from the market or make design changes. During a July 2016 deposition, Kitty Pilarz, the director of product safety for Fisher-Price's parent company, Mattel, was asked to confirm that Fisher-Price had not changed how it marketed the Rock 'n Play Sleeper despite evidence of the deaths. Her reply: "Correct."

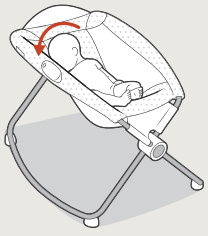
"Is there a particular number [of] children that have to die before that's going to be looked into?" the plaintiff's lawyer asked. Pilarz didn't answer.

Why Inclined Sleepers Are Dangerous

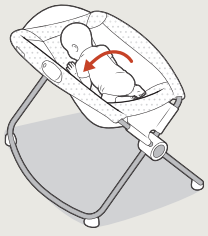
Experts recommend that infants sleep on firm, flat surfaces, but the Rock 'n Play had an incline of about 30 degrees (right). Whether buckled or unbuckled, infants can suffocate in inclined sleepers in three different ways (below).



Bassinets and cribs can incline no more than 10 degrees. The Rock 'n Play had an incline of 30 degrees.



Baby's head turns into side padding



Baby rolls over

Baby's head falls forward

ILLUSTRATIONS: CHRIS PHILPOT

A Law Protecting Companies, Not Consumers

Despite the lawsuits, the CPSC also stayed largely mum on the growing number of deaths. The reason: Section 6(b) of the Consumer Product Safety Act.

Section 6(b) requires the CPSC to seek permission from a manufacturer before it publicly releases information about the company or its products, even when it is a warning about injuries or deaths. It also allows companies to negotiate the language the agency uses in press releases in the event of a safety alert or product recall. Proponents say that by giving companies a chance to review safety concerns first, the law prevents the government from unfairly damaging a company's reputation.

I think Section 6(b) is an abomination that allows defective products to continue to kill or injure consumers, as was the case with the Rock 'n Play. Congress ought to toss Section 6(b) in the trash. "People die because of Section 6(b)," said Elliot Kaye, a former CPSC chairman. "It's that simple."

Even without the constraints of Section 6(b), the CPSC doesn't have the ability to recall products on its own. The agency is required either to get the company's approval or to sue the company for a recall—an expensive, time-consuming step it rarely takes.

Eventually, on May 31, 2018, nearly nine years after the Rock 'n Play Sleeper's launch, the CPSC issued a vague and mild warning in the form of an alert posted on its website titled, "Caregivers Urged to Use Restraints with Inclined Sleep Products." Only in the alert's fourth paragraph did the CPSC mention infant deaths "associated with inclined sleep products." And because it didn't list products by name, many parents familiar with the Rock 'n Play Sleeper would have no idea what an "inclined sleep product" was.

ROCK 'N PLAY'S DECADE OF DANGER

Tally of infant deaths

April 7, 2017: **8 deaths** in rocker-like products are cited by CPSC in proposed regulations for infant inclined sleepers.

Actions taken

April 2010: CPSC proposes new standards for bassinets, requiring them to be firm and flat.

July 12, 2010: Fisher-Price asks CPSC to exempt Rock 'n Play from the bassinet standard. CPSC agrees.

December 2012: Fisher-Price and CPSC learn Sara Thompson's son died in the Rock 'n Play in September 2011.

March 21, 2018: In a deposition, a Fisher-Price employee admits 14 deaths are tied to the Rock 'n Play.

CR Uncovers the Truth

In early 2019, CR reporter Rachel Rabkin Peachman and the CR content team were reviewing data they'd requested from the CPSC. It included information on product failures, injuries, and deaths that manufacturers, health care providers, and consumers had provided to the agency—data that Consumer Reports analyzes regularly. This time, there was something unusual: the manufacturers and product names had not been edited out, as Section 6(b) requires.

There in plain view were details of as many as twenty-nine infant deaths linked to the Fisher-Price Rock 'n Play Sleeper and other deaths in similar products, such as inclined sleepers made by Kids II. For the first time, the vast scope of the deaths, as well as the brands that caused them, were exposed to the public.

Contacted for comment, the agency wrote to CR demanding that the data be destroyed and that nothing be published based on it. How absurd. I wouldn't have believed it except that I read those letters, with their threatening tone, and backed the CR team's desire to press forward.

On April 5, 2019, Fisher-Price and the CPSC issued a joint announcement warning that ten infants had died in the Rock 'n Play since 2015, after they had "rolled from their back to their stomach or side, while unrestrained."

CR immediately went to Fisher-Price to set the record straight: Yes, ten infants had died in the circumstances cited, but the data showed at least twenty-nine infants' deaths had been linked to the Rock 'n Play. A Fisher-Price spokesperson confirmed to CR that the company knew of "approximately thirty-two fatalities since the 2009 product introduction" but said it did "not believe any deaths have been caused by the product."

They were blaming parents for the tragedies.

Sleepers Are Recalled

On April 8, 2019, CR published an article on our website connecting the Rock 'n Play to dozens of infant deaths, and we emphatically called for the product's recall. The findings aired nationally on every evening news program and were published online and in newspapers across the country.

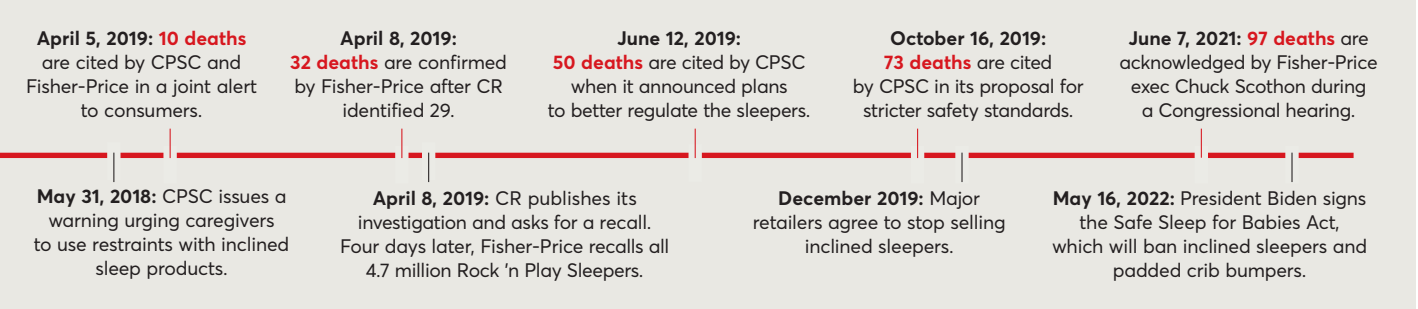
Within two weeks, Fisher-Price went from downplaying a problem to recalling nearly five million sleepers. By the end of the month, Kids II recalled all of its nearly 700,000 inclined infant sleepers.

It took more time to ensure that secondary-market sellers stopped offering the sleepers even though recall laws forbid resale. While eBay uses filters and a team of employees that scours the site for illegal goods, resale platforms like Facebook and Craigslist rely only on warnings, deep in their terms-of-service agreements, urging users not to sell banned products. CR discovered one of the sleepers on sale for $25 on Craigslist in August 2021, more than two years after the original recall.

In the 11 years following the sleeper's release, about 100 infants died. The product might still be on the market today if it weren't for an embarrassing clerical error by the CPSC. It shouldn't take a fluke bureaucratic blunder to keep babies safe.

CR's investigation later broadened to include other products hazardous for infant sleep, such as in-bed sleepers, crib bumpers, pillows, and loungers. CR's advocates urged policymakers to ban all infant sleep products that don't conform to expert medical recommendations that babies should be placed to sleep alone on their backs on a firm, flat surface in a safe sleeping environment.

In the summer of 2022, government rules took effect mandating that any infant product marketed or intended for sleep must meet an already existing federal standard for infant sleep products like a crib, bassinet, or play yard. Also in 2022, President Biden signed the Safe Sleep for Babies Act, which will fully ban both inclined sleepers and padded crib bumpers when it takes effect no later than this November.


May 31, 2018: CPSC issues a warning urging caregivers to use restraints with inclined sleep products.
April 5, 2019: 10 deaths are cited by CPSC and Fisher-Price in a joint alert to consumers.
April 8, 2019: 32 deaths are confirmed by Fisher-Price after CR identified 29.
April 8, 2019: CR publishes its investigation and asks for a recall. Four days later, Fisher-Price recalls all 4.7 million Rock 'n Play Sleepers.
June 12, 2019: 50 deaths are cited by CPSC when it announced plans to better regulate the sleepers.
December 2019: Major retailers agree to stop selling inclined sleepers.
October 16, 2019: 73 deaths are cited by CPSC in its proposal for stricter safety standards.
May 16, 2022: President Biden signs the Safe Sleep for Babies Act, which will ban inclined sleepers and padded crib bumpers.
June 7, 2021: 97 deaths are acknowledged by Fisher-Price exec Chuck Scothon during a Congressional hearing.

CR'S LONG-COVID RECOVERY GUIDE

Anywhere from 10 to 30 percent of people who get COVID-19 experience crushing **FATIGUE, BREATHLESSNESS, BRAIN FOG, OR OTHER SYMPTOMS** long after they first got sick. Here's what to know about the condition and how to find care.

by
KEVIN LORIA

illustrations by
JACK RICHARDSON

During the first wave of COVID-19 in the U.S., healthcare providers reassured countless sick people that unless they needed to be hospitalized, they would be better in a few weeks. But many people, even some with relatively mild cases, were not better in a few weeks. Or even in a few months.

The ongoing condition came to be known by a variety of names, including post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2, or, more familiarly, long COVID.

Today, experts estimate that between 10 and 30 percent of people who have had COVID-19 experience symptoms that occur at least a month after their initial infection. There could now be more than 27 million people in the U.S. affected by long COVID, according to the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

The effects can be debilitating, according to a Consumer Reports July 2022 nationally representative survey of 2,125 U.S. adults. It found that 18 percent of people who had COVID-19 developed or still had symptoms at least four weeks after getting infected—symptoms that were severe enough to make it difficult to return to normal activities.

Although clinics have opened to help these patients and more than a billion dollars is pouring into the National Institutes of Health to study long COVID, that wasn't always the case. Instead, as in the early days of other diseases, such as AIDS, people with long COVID have had to play an active role, first in convincing medical providers that their symptoms were real, then in advocating for research into how to treat them.

Now, while much still remains unknown, the combined efforts of early patient activists, committed scientists, and healthcare providers are starting to pay dividends, with clearer advice for patients seeking support and treatment.

AN EMERGING CONDITION

IN MANY WAYS, long COVID resembles the long-term conditions some people have experienced after other viral diseases, including dengue fever, SARS, and certain strains of influenza. For many of the first people to experience long COVID, the unexpected worsening symptoms were frightening and perplexing.

Chimére L. Smith, 40, was a Baltimore teacher when she got COVID-19 in March 2020. "I felt this very hot burning sensation in my spine, [and] I could not do anything without getting very winded," she says. "I stopped being able to read sentences together." And, alarmingly, instead of improving over time, her symptoms worsened.

"I ended up going to the hospital 13 or 14 times over six months in 2020," she says. "I thought I was going to die."

Two years later, Smith's symptoms have improved, but she is still dealing with a number of issues, including fatigue and chronic migraines.

To make matters worse, many with long COVID say they faced disbelief when first seeking care, especially if they got sick early on or didn't have severe COVID-19. Chris Dansereau, 48, an information technology technician in Massachusetts who also had COVID-19 in March 2020, says his provider initially attributed his ongoing symptoms to anxiety.

That's why many researchers now emphasize that despite continued unknowns, there's no doubt that long COVID is "a real thing," says Kathleen Bell, MD, former chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. Clarity has emerged in part simply because so many people—nearly 600 million worldwide—have now had COVID-19. And many of them have developed long COVID.

Its widespread impact has accelerated research into the condition. In June 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released guidance to help medical providers understand and treat people with post-COVID conditions. Patients themselves played a key role in developing that guidance, sharing their experiences as they fought to get long COVID recognized and helped each other navigate the condition, says Fiona Lowenstein, who co-founded the Body Politic COVID-19 Support Group.

Thanks in part to these efforts, some people are finally starting to get relief—including Dansereau.

He has had several relapses and still has some blurred vision, leg swelling, and "a little bit of brain fog," he says. But two years after first experiencing long-COVID symptoms, "the trouble breathing, low energy levels, and heart palpitations, that's gone for me," Dansereau says. And when relapses come, he says, he now knows that "you feel like this is permanent, but it's going to get better."

A WIDE VARIETY OF SYMPTOMS

PEOPLE WITH LONG COVID have cataloged dozens of associated symptoms, but a few stand out. Those include fatigue and breathing discomfort, as well as cognitive dysfunction such as brain fog, which is characterized by problems with memory, finding words, and the ability to focus.

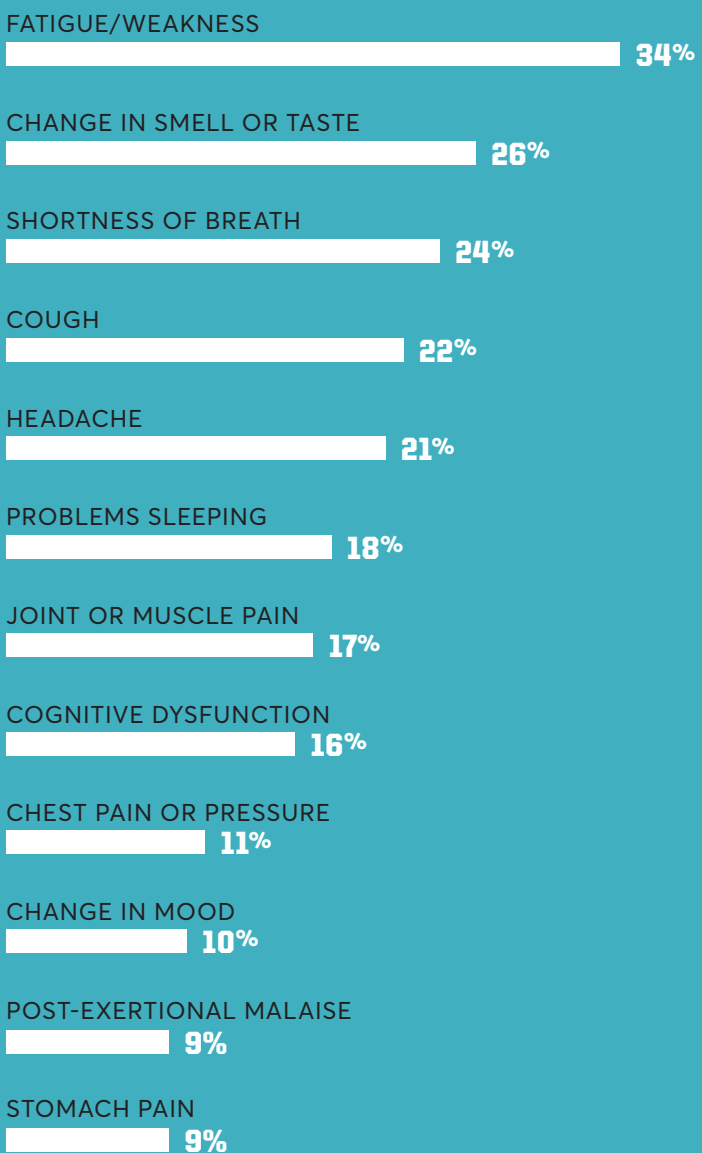
Other reported symptoms include stomach and other issues such as heartburn, constipation, and diarrhea; dizziness and rapid heart rate; problems sleeping; and persistent loss of smell, though it appears less common in patients infected with the omicron variant of the disease, according to Bell.

The severity of symptoms also varies widely, says Benjamin Abramoff, MD, who is director of Penn Medicine's Post-COVID Assessment and Recovery Clinic in Philadelphia and has helped develop clinical guidance for treating various symptoms of long COVID. For some, fatigue might prevent a regular runner from getting back to their routine. For others, it can be so intense that they can't even get out of bed.

Researchers are still trying to figure out the biological mechanisms behind these symptoms. Some think that SARS-CoV-2 could leave behind viral particles or even a hidden, ongoing infection–in the gut, for example. Others think tiny blood clots or damage to small blood vessels could play a role, affecting blood flow to the brain and other vital organs. The virus could also trigger an autoimmune reaction, where the body creates antibodies that attack healthy cells, Abramoff says. And Bell says that "everybody is pretty convinced there is an element of persisting inflammation," perhaps a reaction to viral particles or damage from the initial infection.

How Long COVID Affects Us

Here are the symptoms most often reported among a group of 465 people in a CDC study who had COVID-19 symptoms lasting four weeks or longer.



9,130,641 to **27,391,922*** people in the U.S. have experienced long COVID.

*Estimated, based on reported cases of COVID-19 as of Aug. 12, 2022. Actual number may be as high as 57 million.
Source: American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

HOW TO FIND RELIEF

BECAUSE RESEARCH on how to best treat long COVID is still emerging, many patients have worked with one another in online groups and collaborated with researchers to share what helps them most. Here are suggestions from such patients, as well as doctors like Abramoff at Penn Medicine and Bell at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

■ **Start with your primary healthcare provider.** With long COVID now so common, there's a good chance that your regular healthcare provider has at least some experience with it. They may also be able to rule out other health issues, provide referrals, and generally keep track of your progress.

There's no one medication that will help everyone with long COVID, but doctors can try to address certain symptoms with prescription drugs. For example, steroids might be used for some people to tamp down inflammation, Bell says. Stimulants such as modafinil are sometimes used to treat fatigue. In small studies, doctors are testing whether antiviral treatments like Paxlovid, used to treat COVID-19, might inhibit the virus. But right now, "you have to do individualized treatments, not one size fits all," Bell says.

Your regular healthcare provider may also be able to help by diagnosing long COVID in the first place. Some people might not realize that their symptoms are a result of a prior COVID-19 infection, says Smith, the Baltimore teacher. That prompted her to do outreach in high-risk communities, where COVID-19 hit hard and information about long COVID is less available.

■ **Look for a long-COVID clinic.** If your symptoms are particularly severe, multifaceted, or long-lasting, consider looking for a clinic that focuses on the condition. Care at such clinics is often led by a physiatrist–a doctor who focuses on rehabilitation–who can help coordinate with other specialists you may need.

But be forewarned that such care can be hard to find. "There is absolutely a dearth of clinics or practitioners who have a good handle on how to evaluate and treat post-COVID," Bell says. That can mean long waiting lists. If you do get an appointment, there's no guarantee of relief, say patient experts such as Lowenstein. Still, some people are helped. Search for providers at survivorcorps.com/pccc, which has a list organized by patient-led support groups.

■ **Consult with a specialist experienced in your symptoms.** Some people with severe fatigue from long COVID have found that doctors who treat myalgic encephalomyelitis, aka chronic fatigue syndrome, can offer some help, Lowenstein says.

Similarly, those with dizziness or heart palpitations may work with a cardiologist experienced in treating a condition called postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, which causes a similar set of symptoms.

People with brain fog might benefit from testing by a neurologist or a neuropsychologist. "The idea is not just to determine what cognitive areas may be challenging but also to identify relative

Are You at Risk?

Anyone who has had COVID-19, including those who've had it more than once, can get long COVID. But here is who is more likely to experience it.

Women

Research suggests women are about 20 to 50 percent more likely to experience long COVID than men, for reasons that are still unclear.

Adults Ages 45 to 69

The risk of lingering COVID-19 symptoms appears to rise steadily from young adulthood to about age 69, then tapers off.

People With Chronic Disease

Those with type 2 diabetes seem to face a particularly high risk of long COVID, as do those who are overweight or have asthma.

strengths," says Steven Flanagan, MD, who specializes in brain injury rehabilitation at NYU Langone Health in New York City. That allows providers to "develop compensatory strategies for identified areas of weakness."

An occupational therapist might also help with brain fog by using cognitive rehabilitation. For example, multitasking can be hard for people with brain fog, Bell says. Learning to stay focused on one task at a time can help people avoid being overwhelmed.

People who have lost smell and taste could try olfactory or smell training, which involves relearning scents over time through practice with strong-smelling items like coffee and perfumes. Check out the resources offered by AbScent (abscent.org), an organization for people with smell loss, or consult with an ear, nose, and throat specialist.

> "There's a world of people out there who will help you **FIGURE OUT HOW TO LIVE.**"
>
> ***JD Davids**, co-founder, Network for Long COVID Justice*

■ **Consider making dietary changes.** Many people with long COVID have tried to address symptoms by changing their diet. Dansereau, the IT technician, for example, adopted a Mediterranean-style diet. "Once I got my diet under control, symptoms gradually subsided," he says. The Mediterranean diet—high in vegetables, fish, and healthy fats—which is considered anti-inflammatory, is recommended for long-COVID patients by the British Dietetic Association.

Some people notice an improvement when they eat a low-histamine diet, limiting cheeses, fruits, seafood, and nuts, according to the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Others have tried eating frequent small meals to help stabilize energy levels, a common strategy for people with chronic fatigue syndrome.

Still, caution is warranted: No one dietary approach yet stands out as being especially effective, says Flanagan, though "adopting a good, well-balanced diet" may help.

And JD Davids, who co-founded the Network for Long COVID Justice, a consortium of patient-led long-COVID groups, says to be skeptical about advice involving expensive supplements or dramatic dietary changes. Discuss any significant changes you are considering with your physician or a dietitian.

■ **Stay active—but don't overdo it.** Some people with long COVID have found relief through carefully structured activity programs or physical therapy. Such programs should be individualized based on a person's capacity for exertion, according to medical experts. This may involve a specialist like a cardiologist prescribing a specific amount of activity.

Guidance on treating long COVID emphasizes that patients should be careful not to push too hard. Working out too intensely may worsen symptoms, a problem so common it has a name: "post-exertional malaise."

People Who Had Severe COVID-19

People hospitalized with COVID-19 may be at higher risk of developing long COVID, according to a May 2022 analysis of 78,252 patients. About 24 percent of people with long COVID in that analysis had been hospitalized with COVID-19. By comparison, only about 8 percent of people with COVID-19 overall had ever been hospitalized with the disease.

The Unvaccinated

Getting vaccinated and boosted may reduce the risk of long COVID by lowering your chance of getting sick in the first place and, if you do get COVID-19, by lowering the chance that your case will be severe. But exactly how much protection vaccination offers is uncertain, with one study showing a 50 percent reduction and another as little as 15 percent.

People With Greater Exposure to COVID-19

Because of existing health inequities and higher risk of exposure to the virus, communities hardest hit by the pandemic—including Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities—also appear to be at higher risk for long COVID, says Georges C. Benjamin, MD, executive director of the American Public Health Association. They may also be less able to get adequate care for the condition, he says.

What You Can Do

The best advice for avoiding long COVID is the same as avoiding COVID-19 itself. That means making sure you are up to date on vaccines, including boosters. And consider wearing a mask in crowded indoor places, especially when COVID-19 risk is higher, says Kathleen Bell, MD, of the UT Southwestern Medical Center. For example, she says, "I am going to wear a face mask every time I get on a plane, a train, or a bus."

Angela Meriquez Vázquez, a COVID-19 long-hauler who is now the interim president of Body Politic, says that's what happens to her. "I could go for a 3-mile run right now–I believe my body with enough adrenaline could do that," she says. "But I would pay the consequences for a month."

Experts recommend pacing yourself. "I encourage folks to remain physically and cognitively active but without going to the point of exhaustion ... and building up slowly over time," Flanagan says. For Dansereau, that meant "gradually each day trying to build activity just a little bit more."

If you have trouble breathing, Abramoff, at Penn, recommends breathing exercises, such as pursed lip breathing, where you breathe in through your nose, then exhale through pursed lips for twice as long. Some patients may qualify for pulmonary rehabilitation, where you work with a respiratory therapist on techniques to help avoid feeling out of breath.

■ **Identify your triggers.** Lowenstein, at Body Politic, recommends tracking your fatigue, brain fog, and other symptoms, trying to see if you can identify a trigger, such as staring at a screen or sitting up for too long.

■ **Find support.** Many people find it helpful to connect with others having a similar experience, says Davids, the long-COVID patient advocate. "There's a whole world of people out there who aren't providers who will help you figure out how to live," he says.

Take care not to send yourself on a worry spiral by focusing just on concerning posts, Dansereau says. Look for success stories, and tips from people who say they are getting better.

■ **Get insurance to pay.** One sign that long COVID is gaining medical legitimacy is that there is now a diagnostic code for it. That means healthcare providers can more easily bill insurers, and insurers may be more likely to cover it. Smith, in Baltimore, has fought to ensure that doctors link her symptoms to long COVID in her medical record–and that they know the code: ICD-10 code U09.9.

Even with that code, insurers may refuse to cover care if they don't consider it "medically necessary" or if you exceed a certain number of appointments with physical or occupational therapists. If that happens, you can appeal with the insurer and, if that fails, request a third-party review.

One other potential problem: In response to the pandemic, Congress temporarily expanded subsidies to people with Affordable Care Act health insurance plans. But this is not permanent and could be rolled back, says Katherine Hempstead, PhD, a senior policy adviser at the health-focused Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Making the subsidies permanent and expanding Medicaid "are the biggest opportunities we have to make sure everyone has access to treatment," she says.

■ **Apply for disability benefits.** Long COVID can qualify as a disability when it substantially limits major life activities, according to the Department of Health & Human Services. That means housing accommodations and other protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act may be accessible, and you may be eligible for employer leave.

Qualifying for disability income can be more challenging, in part because long COVID is so new and poorly understood. Someone must show they have been or will be unable to work for at least 12 months. Historically, most people applying for disability income are denied.

In a 2021 speech, President Biden acknowledged the urgent need for such services. "We're bringing agencies together to make sure Americans with long COVID have access to the rights and resources that are due under the disability law," he said, "so they can live their lives in dignity and get the support they need."

To find more information and resources for people with long COVID, go to covid.gov/longcovid.

ROAD REPORT

NEWS & EXPERT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU AHEAD OF THE CURVE™

TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

Check Your Spare Tire

Remember to periodically inspect your spare tire to make sure that it's properly inflated and that the rubber hasn't deteriorated. Also check the wheel for corrosion. This is especially important if your spare is mounted on the rear or under your vehicle and exposed to the elements. If the spare is hard to access, ask your mechanic to check it at each tire rotation. Regardless of condition, unused spare tires should be replaced at least every 10 years.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Apple CarPlay Takes Over the Dash

Apple's latest version of CarPlay, coming with the iOS 16 system update this fall, will **radically change dashboards** in compatible new cars. Presently, CarPlay can **interact with phone navigation and music apps** and display them on the car's infotainment screen. The new version will extend the integration to the instrument panel, allowing **customization for speed, RPM, mileage, and more.** Partners include Ford, Honda, and Nissan.

THE VITAL STATISTIC

3 YEARS

The amount of time it will take you to break even on the extra cost of buying a hybrid version over a similar conventional model of car, due to how much you'll be saving on gas.* At the three-year mark, you'll start saving about $585 a year, on average. Some hybrids, such as the Lexus NX, bring savings on Day One.

*Calculation is based on gas costing $4.50 a gallon and 12,000 miles driven annually.

RECALL

Ford

The Ford Motor Company is recalling 2020-2022 Ford Escape SUVs, Ford Maverick pickup trucks, and Lincoln Corsair SUVs fitted with the 2.5-liter hybrid powertrain. There are concerns that an engine failure could cause the release of oil and/or fuel vapor and lead to an underhood fire. The recall involves 100,689 vehicles in the U.S.

WHAT TO DO: Dealers will modify the underengine shield and active grille shutter. Call Ford at 866-436-7332 for more information.

THE BETTER DEAL

HIGHER PRICE	BETTER PRICE
Lexus UX250h	Toyota RAV4 Hybrid
$37,740*	$34,193*
71	68

*Price as tested.

THE LOWDOWN

The Lexus UX is luxe and efficient, but the RAV4 hybrid is a smarter choice. It gets the same 37 mpg but has more space for less money. For more pampering, go with the RAV4 Hybrid XLE Premium. It still costs less than the UX.

ILLUSTRATION: KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS. PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; APPLE

The Safety Features You Want Right Now

Blind spot warning. Check.
Automatic emergency braking. Also check.
Here, features that work best for you—and some that don't.

BY KEITH BARRY

YOU'RE BACKING out of a tricky parking spot when a beep beep beep warns there's a car approaching. Or you're about to change lanes when a flashing light gives you the heads-up that there's a car in your blind spot.

You can find these and other advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS)—radar, cameras, and other technology—on many new cars. Drivers love some of these features so much

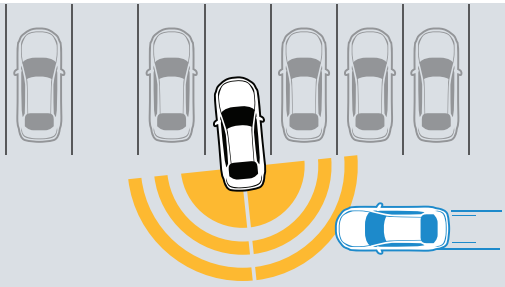
PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

The Most-Liked Features

These are the five ADAS systems our members say they like the most. Studies from AAA and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) show that AEB and BSW can reduce crashes. Other systems, such as ACC and LCA, take the stress out of traffic jams and long highway drives.

1 Rear cross traffic warning (RCTW)

When your car is in Reverse gear and about to back up, this feature alerts you if it detects vehicles approaching behind you from either side. Some systems also warn of pedestrians or other objects.



72% OVERALL SATISFACTION

that they say they wouldn't buy a car without them. But others, they tell us, are more trouble than they're worth.

We asked more than 47,000 Consumer Reports members how satisfied they are with the ADAS systems on their cars. Our goal: to determine which systems you should look for when buying your next vehicle.

CR members say they love five systems in particular. These favorites, in order of satisfaction, are: rear cross traffic warning (RCTW), blind spot warning (BSW), adaptive cruise control (ACC), lane centering assistance (LCA), and automatic emergency braking (AEB). (For descriptions of these features, see our guide that begins above.)

Drivers say they love features that automatically steer, brake, and accelerate in certain situations, such as in traffic jams and on long highway slogs. But they don't like systems that second-guess their actions, such as lane departure warning (LDW) and lane keeping assistance (LKA), which beep or take control of steering even when you're swerving out of a lane to give cyclists a wide berth or to avoid an obstacle in your lane.

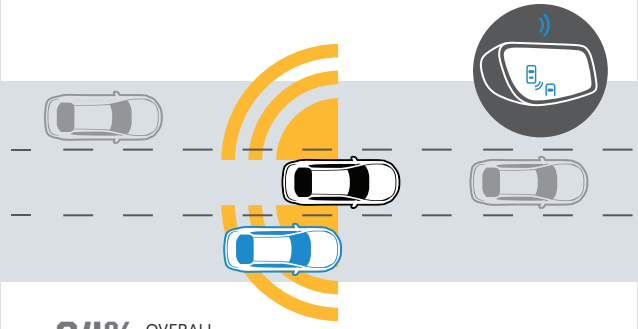
These preferences come as no surprise to Kelly Funkhouser, CR's program manager for vehicle technology and an ADAS expert. "The best systems help drivers stay safer and more relaxed behind the wheel," she says. "The worst systems take a driver's attention away from the road."

On these pages, you'll learn which brands and models provide the ADAS features that readers said they like the best and that are most effective, and you'll learn how to assess these systems on a test drive.

ADAS Systems *(continued)*

2 Blind spot warning (BSW)

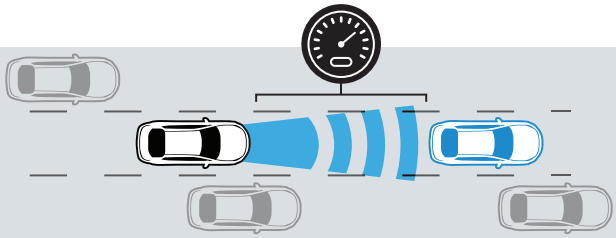
When your car is moving, this feature detects vehicles in the blind spot and notifies you, usually with a light in a side mirror, and escalates the warning if you activate the turn signal.



64% OVERALL SATISFACTION

3 Adaptive cruise control (ACC)

This feature is advanced cruise control that also assists with acceleration and/or braking so that you can maintain a set distance from the vehicle in front. Most systems can bring the car to a stop and then start up again as traffic conditions allow, while others disengage at about 20 mph.



63% OVERALL SATISFACTION

Brands With Popular Safety Features

WE ANALYZED MORE THAN 280 new car models to find which automakers do the best job at making the five most popular ADAS features standard equipment on their new vehicles.

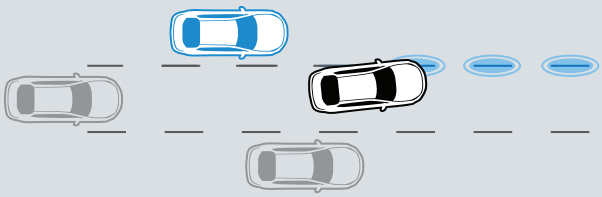
Even among the brands with the most popular ADAS features standard across their lineups, some of these five systems may be missing from specific cars due to ongoing semiconductor chip shortages. "Not all websites or brochures will have up-to-date information, so you should check the window sticker of the exact car you're buying," says Jake Fisher, senior director of CR's Auto Test Center. "If it's on the window sticker, it's on the car."

The top eight brands here are listed in descending order by average percentage of models in their lineups with each of the five systems standard as of Aug. 1. The list starts with Genesis, which is the only brand to offer all five systems on every model in its lineup. We did not count vehicles with AEB systems that work only at low speeds and/or do not detect pedestrians. We counted BSW systems only with their alerts displayed on or near the side mirrors.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY T.M. DETWILER. PHOTOS, FACING PAGE: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; LEXUS

4 Lane centering assistance (LCA)

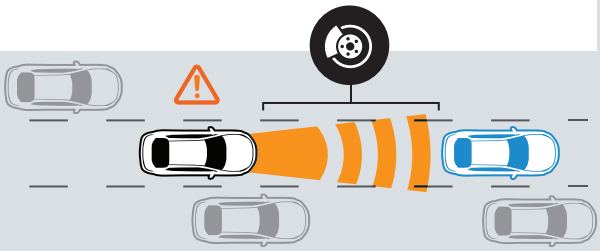
This feature helps the driver with steering to keep the vehicle centered within painted lane lines. These systems are not designed to take the place of an attentive driver.



60% OVERALL SATISFACTION

5 Automatic emergency braking (AEB)

AEB detects potential collisions with a vehicle ahead and automatically applies the brakes to avoid impact or lessen the severity of a crash. Some systems also detect pedestrians and cyclists.



59% OVERALL SATISFACTION

Genesis

From SUVs to traditional luxury sedans, every new Genesis vehicle comes standard with the five ADAS systems that our members like the most. It's the only car brand that accomplishes this feat.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 **GV70** (SHOWN), G70, G80, G90, and GV80; 2023 GV60

Lexus

All new Lexus vehicles come standard with AEB, RCTW, and BSW. ACC with stop-and-go is available on most models, but it works only at speeds above 30 mph on the GX SUV and the RC coupe.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 **ES** (SHOWN), IS, LS, LX, NX, RX, and UX

Brands With Popular Safety Features *(continued)*

Acura

All new Acura vehicles have LCA and AEB standard, and every Acura SUV comes with all five systems standard. However, BSW and RCTW are still optional on the current Acura TLX and outgoing ILX sedans.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 **MDX** (SHOWN) and RDX; 2023 Integra

Volvo

Safety features BSW, RCTW, and AEB come standard on all new Volvos. Some convenience features cost extra on most models, but ACC with stop-and-go comes standard on the C40 Recharge EV, XC90 SUV, S90 sedan, and V90 wagon.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 C40 Recharge, **S90** (SHOWN)/V90, and XC90

Lincoln

While some convenience features, such as LCA and ACC, cost extra on most models, safety features—BSW, RCTW, and AEB—come standard on all new Lincoln vehicles.

MODEL WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 **Navigator** (SHOWN)

Honda

Among nonluxury brands, Honda leads the way with providing key ADAS systems standard on the most vehicles. However, BSW is still optional on the popular Accord and Civic sedans, and ACC with stop-and-go isn't available on the Passport and Pilot.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 Insight; 2023 CR-V and **Odyssey** (SHOWN)

PHOTOS, THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; VOLVO; INFINITI; TOYOTA; IZMOSTOCK; LINCOLN

Infiniti

The majority of Infiniti models come standard with at least three of the most popular ADAS systems, but all five features are only optional on the Q60 coupe.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 **QX50** (SHOWN); 2023 QX55

Toyota

Most new Toyota vehicles come standard with AEB, ACC, and LCA, but BSW and RCTW are optional on many popular models, such as the Camry, Corolla, Highlander, Prius, and RAV4.

MODELS WITH ALL POPULAR ADAS STANDARD:
2022 Avalon, C-HR, Mirai, RAV4 Prime, Sienna, and **Venza** (SHOWN); 2023 bZ4X and Sequoia

Your Test Drive Checklist

Some ADAS systems work better than others. Here are the questions to ask yourself and the salesperson when taking a test drive.

Is the blind spot warning on the side mirrors?

Tesla puts its BSW warning in the dashboard display. Such placement can take a driver's eyes off the road, says Funkhouser. "You should already be checking your mirrors, so it's the natural place to put a warning," she says.

Can you turn off rear AEB?

Drivers told us they love systems that help them see whether the coast is clear when backing out of a parking space. But they dislike rear AEB systems that are too sensitive and make it harder to back up in crowded parking lots, or that beep when a bike rack is installed on the back of the vehicle. Check whether you can turn off rear AEB while leaving RCTW active in those situations.

Does the car put up a fight?

Some drivers complain that LDW and LKA systems beep relentlessly or aggressively steer the car, even when a driver is intentionally crossing a painted line to avoid trouble. Be sure to try out this feature on a test drive.

Are the alarms too alarming?

Drivers tend to prefer systems with a steering wheel or seat vibration over those with an audible beep, says Funkhouser, but they also complained when the vibrations were distractingly strong—as was the case for some Honda and Acura vehicles.

Does ACC work in stop-and-go traffic?

Not all ACC systems work at low speeds, and they can shut off when traffic snarls or creeps at speeds below 20 mph. If you're buying a car for the ACC, make sure it has a "stop-and-go" feature.

Reliable Used Cars We Love

WITH INFLATION AND supply shortages, you may want to consider buying a used car for a better selection and lower prices. New models offer the latest in collision avoidance and crash protection features, but 3-, 5-, and even 10-year-old used cars can be safe, too, if you know where to look.

To help you find a good used car without having to do your own data dive, we've selected standout models from the 2020, 2018, and 2013 model years based on the following criteria:

- CR's ratings for performance, reliability, and owner satisfaction;
- Average or better reliability in our member surveys;
- Crash protection based on the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) moderate-overlap front, side, roof strength, and head restraint tests;
- Crash test results from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, if rated.

Plus, all the vehicles below earned our recommendation when new.

3 YEARS OLD

▲ 2020 Ford Edge

PRICE RANGE $25,700 - $39,200 **FUEL** 22 mpg

The Co-Pilot 360 safety suite became standard on this two-row SUV for 2019 and includes FCW, AEB, and BSW.

2020 Honda CR-V

PRICE RANGE $27,675 - $37,000 **FUEL** 28 mpg

The CR-V shines among small SUVs. It's roomy, fuel-efficient, and equipped with key systems like FCW and AEB.

2020 Toyota Avalon Hybrid

PRICE RANGE $33,400 - $41,375 **FUEL** 42 mpg

This large, efficient sedan comes with FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, LDW, RCTW, and automatic cruise control.

5 YEARS OLD

▲ 2018 Lincoln MKZ

PRICE RANGE $23,475 - $35,725 **FUEL** 23 mpg

Driving the MKZ is a luxurious experience. Look for a hybrid and top trims for key safety features, like FCW and AEB.

2018 Mazda CX-5

PRICE RANGE $20,875 - $24,950 **FUEL** 24 mpg

Bringing more refinement than the price suggests, the sporty, reliable CX-5 has FCW and AEB as standard equipment.

2018 Toyota Highlander

PRICE RANGE $28,025 - $38,850 **FUEL** 22 mpg

The family-friendly three-row Highlander comes equipped with FCW and AEB. Plus, there's a fuel-efficient hybrid.

10 YEARS OLD

▲ 2013 Honda Accord

PRICE RANGE $12,550 - $15,900 **FUEL** 30 mpg

Comfortable, roomy, and fuel-efficient, the Accord is nice to drive and got top marks from IIHS for crashworthiness.

2013 Subaru Outback

PRICE RANGE $10,275 - $13,625 **FUEL** 24 mpg

The Outback is a smart alternative to traditional SUVs. Seek models with the camera-based EyeSight safety system.

2013 Toyota Prius V

PRICE $14,375 **FUEL** 41 mpg

Larger than a regular Prius, the Prius V wagon counts great visibility and a roomy back seat among its virtues.

ILLUSTRATION: KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS. PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS (2)

Note: See the complete list at **CR.org/safeusedcars.**

WORSE — BETTER | RECOMMENDED | GREEN CHOICE

SMALL SUVs

Kia Sportage Hybrid

Big Improvements From Electric Assist

75
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 82

HIGHS Fuel economy, composed ride, roomy interior, easy to get in and out of

LOWS Braking, unintuitive gear selector

POWERTRAIN 227-hp, 1.6-liter turbo 4-cylinder hybrid engine; 6-speed automatic transmission; AWD

FUEL 36 mpg on regular

PRICE $27,290-$42,990 base price + $1,295 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $32,095

THE HYBRID VERSION of the Sportage mirrors a trend we've been seeing: Adding electric assist to a conventional model makes it quicker and quieter, transforming the driving experience. That the hybrid gets 36 mpg overall—an 11-mpg gain over the regular version—solidifies it as the slam-dunk Sportage choice.

This powertrain, built around a turbocharged four-cylinder, yields a responsive 227 hp. The Sportage hybrid leaves the line with a silky electric push, and transitions smoothly back and forth between gas and electric. The hearty midrange power means the automatic doesn't have to change gears as often as the gas-only model, which needs to downshift frequently to keep up with traffic.

Other differences are small but significant. The hybrid's ride is slightly more comfortable and the cabin is quieter because the hybrid can drive on electric power up to about 30 mph, plus the engine is less buzzy.

The hybrid's handling isn't quite as accomplished, though; it feels softer, with more body roll than the regular version, and it was 3.5 mph slower through our avoidance maneuver. The hybrid also needed 5 feet more to stop during our panic-brake tests, and the brake pedal can feel a bit grabby.

All Sportages have annoying split-use climate and audio controls that require toggling back and forth between the systems. The hybrid also has a rotary gear selector that takes some practice.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian and cyclist detection, LDW, and LKA are standard. BSW and RCTW aren't available on the base LX but come standard on higher trims.

COMPACT LUXURY CARS

Acura Integra

Efficient and Fun, but Short on Luxury

75
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 77

HIGHS Fuel economy, handling, controls, hatchback versatility

LOWS Ride, noise, low stance makes it hard to get in and out of

POWERTRAIN 200-hp, 1.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL 31 mpg on premium

PRICE $30,800-$35,800 base price + $1,095 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $34,395

ACURA REVIVED the "Integra" name, last used in 2001, for an entry-level luxury four-door hatchback that replaces the ILX in the lineup. Just like two decades ago, the Integra serves as an upscale version of the Honda Civic. We found the new Integra to be a capable and fun car to drive. But it's short on refinement, comfort, and flair for a sporty model from a premium brand.

The Integra comes with a 200-hp, turbo four-cylinder paired with a continuously variable transmission, or a slick-shifting six-speed manual (a rarity these days). It trails some rivals in acceleration, but it works fine during normal driving. We don't like that the CVT causes engine revs to rise and fall on long uphills, a trait that gets exacerbated when the car is pushed hard.

Handling is responsive and the Integra achieved a higher speed than the Audi A3 and Genesis G70 through our avoidance maneuver, although it doesn't feel as sharp or eager to tackle turns as those rivals out on the road. More significantly, the ride is stiff and choppy, causing occupants to buck uncomfortably over bumps. There's also more road and engine noise than you'd expect in this luxury segment.

We like the Integra's straightforward controls, although the lack of a standard dual-zone climate system is a glaring omission. You also have to opt for the most expensive version to get a wireless phone charger and wireless Android Auto/Apple CarPlay. The front seats lose support quickly, and the driver's seat does not have a lumbar adjustment feature.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA come standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **FCW** forward collision warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

LUXURY ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Mercedes-Benz EQS

Techno-Wonder With Terrible Controls

68
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 95

HIGHS Acceleration, quietness, ride, maneuverability, front-seat comfort, fit and finish, no tailpipe emissions

LOWS Brake-pedal feel, driving position, distracting controls

POWERTRAIN 516-hp, dual electric motors; 1-speed direct-drive; all-wheel drive

RANGE 340 miles

PRICE $102,310-$151,050 base price + $1,050 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $135,875

THE EQS IS a technological showcase for Mercedes' electric future. It has a generous EV driving range, an ultra-high-tech infotainment screen, and a plethora of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS). It's tantalizing, impressive, and super-comfortable–and the most expensive vehicle CR has ever purchased. Even so, we came away frustrated with the EQS' distracting controls and odd-feeling brakes.

The EQS 580 4Matic we tested has an EPA-rated range of 340 miles, allowing days of use between plugging in. Thanks to a prodigious 516 hp, it zipped from 0 to 60 mph in just 4 seconds. Despite its portly 5,800-pound curb weight, the EQS is nimble through corners, with quick steering and little body roll.

The front seats are comfortable, but you feel like you need to peer up and over the tall instrument-panel shroud to see out, and some drivers found that the steering wheel rim cut off the upper part of the gauge display. The rear seat is disappointing–there's lots of legroom, but headroom is tight and the seatback is overly upright.

Mercedes' dash-spanning Hyperscreen even includes a display for the front passenger. The controls require a massive learning curve, and few tasks are simple to complete; that it takes five steps to adjust the driver's seat lumbar through the screen is preposterous. We also didn't like the way the mushy-feeling brake pedal moves toward the floor on its own when using brake-regeneration–it's eerie.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, reverse automatic emergency braking, LDW, and LKA all come standard.

FIRST DRIVE

LARGE SUVs

Toyota Sequoia

Big and Powerful, but Already Outdated

WE LIKE Powertrain, front seats, infotainment system, the cabin in the Capstone trim

WE DON'T LIKE Ponderous handling, no full-time 4WD system, tiny third-row seat, limited cargo room

POWERTRAIN 437-hp, 3.5-liter twin-turbocharged V6 hybrid engine; 10-speed automatic transmission; four-wheel drive

FUEL 20 mpg combined (EPA)

PRICE $58,300-$78,300 base price + $1,495 destination charge
Total MSRP as driven $79,795

THE NEW SEQUOIA is based on the Toyota Tundra pickup, which was redesigned for 2022. Like that truck, this SUV boasts large towing and payload capacities, an easy-to-use infotainment system, and a rich roster of active safety features. We rented a pre-production Sequoia, which is offered only as a hybrid, ahead of buying one for our testing program. Here are our first impressions.

While the Tundra's redesign was an improvement, in many ways the new Sequoia feels like a letdown. The high point for the new Sequoia is unquestionably the standard 437-hp, twin-turbo hybrid V6 and smooth-shifting 10-speed automatic. This combo makes for plentiful passing power, whether on the highway or a lower-speed country road. Keep in mind, the Sequoia's hybrid system is designed to boost performance rather than provide impressive mpg, much like the Ford F-150 hybrid.

The Sequoia's handling is disappointing. The steering is slow and vague, and the big SUV lumbers through corners. Despite the solid rear axle from the Tundra, the Sequoia has a mostly bump-free ride at low speeds, but it tends to jiggle over broken pavement. As a result, it feels crude compared with its rivals that have independent rear suspensions.

The suspension and hybrid battery make for limited cargo room and an uncomfortable third-row seat. The 14-inch infotainment display has simple-to-decipher text, and we like the large knobs, physical buttons, and toggle switches for other controls.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian and cyclist detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, LKA, adaptive cruise control, and automatic high beams come standard.

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **FCW** forward collision warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

Ratings › **Hits and Misses** The Sportage hybrid gets a boost over the gas-only model. The Mercedes EQS is impressive and expensive, while the new Integra is underwhelming.

Make + Model	Overall Score	Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-Test Results: Road-test score	Overall mpg	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	Suitcases + duffels/ Cargo volume, cu. ft.	Active Safety Features: FCW	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW
SUVs $25,000-$35,000																			
✓ **Hyundai Tucson** 1.6T+H	93	⏫	⏫	92	35	↑ / ⏫	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	53.0	7.7	132	38.5	S	S	O	S
✓ **Hyundai Tucson** 2.5L	89	⏫	⏫	86	26	↑ / ⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	↑	53.0	9.6	130	38.5	S	S	O	S
✓ **Kia Sportage** 1.6T+H	75	–	↑	82	36	↑ / ⏫	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	52.0	7.7	139	38.0	S	S	S	O
✓ **Kia Sportage** 2.5L	72	–	↑	78	25	↑ / ⏫	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	55.5	10.0	134	38.0	S	S	S	O
✓ **Toyota RAV4** 2.5H	68	–	–	76	37	↑ / ↑	↑	–	–	–	↑	52.0	7.8	139	30.5	S	S	S	O
✓ **Toyota RAV4** 2.5L	65	–	–	72	27	↑ / ↑	↑	↓	–	–	↑	54.0	8.3	131	30.5	S	S	S	O
Ford Escape 2.5H	60	↓	–	82	34	– / ↑	⏫	↑	–	–	↑	51.0	8.3	128	30.5	S	S	S	S
Ford Escape 1.5T	55	↓	–	73	26	– / ↑	⏫	–	–	–	↑	53.0	8.9	128	30.5	S	S	S	S
CARS $35,000-$45,000																			
✓ **Volkswagen Arteon** 2.0T	82	–	–	91	24	↑ / ↑	⏫	↑	↑	↑	↑	53.5	7.9	125	4+1	S	S	S	S
✓ **Audi A3** 2.0T	76	–	↑	83	31	⏫ / ↓	↑	↑	–	↑	↑	55.5	6.8	120	2+0	S	S	S	O
✓ **Acura Integra** 1.5T	75	–	↑	77	31	↑ / ↑	⏫	–	–	↑	↑	57.0	7.7	129	3+0	S	S	S	S
✓ **Genesis G70** 2.0T	73	–	↑	74	23	↑ / ⏬	↑	↑	↑	⏫	⏫	56.5	7.8	137	2+0	S	S	S	S
✓ **BMW 228i Gran Coupe** 2.0T	71	–	↑	75	27	⏫ / ↓	–	↑	–	↑	↑	51.0	7.2	132	2+2	S	S	O	S
✓ **Kia Stinger** 2.5T	70	–	–	75	23	⏫ / –	↑	↑	–	↑	⏫	53.5	7.5	132	3+0	S	S	S	S
Cadillac CT4 2.0T	58	↓	↓	78	25	⏫ / ↓	↑	↑	–	↑	⏫	55.0	7.4	129	2+1	S	S	O	S
Mercedes-Benz CLA250 2.0T	55	↓	–	65	27	↑ / ⏬	⏬	↑	↓	⏫	↑	56.0	6.6	131	2+2	S	S	S	S
ELECTRIC VEHICLES OVER $75,000																			
Mercedes-Benz EQS	68	↓	⏫	95	94 ◫	⏫ / ↑	⏬	⏫	⏫	⏫	↑	55.5	4.0	133	3+2	S	S	S	S
Porsche Taycan	61	↓	↑	86	77 ◫	⏫ / –	↓	⏫	↑	↑	⏫	52.5	4.0	130	1+3	S	S	S	O
Tesla Model S	60	⏬	⏫	88	120 ◫	↑ / –	⏬	⏫	↑	↑	–	58.0	3.2	125	4+3	S	S	S	–
Jaguar I-Pace	58	↓	–	82	76 ◫	↑ / ↑	↓	⏫	–	⏫	⏫	52.0	4.3	136	25.5	S	S	–	S
Audi E-Tron	49	⏬	–	90	74 ◫	⏫ / ⏫	–	⏫	⏫	⏫	↑	49.5	6.3	131	28.0	S	S	S	S
Tesla Model X	41	⏬	↑	72	102 ◫	⏫ / –	⏬	↑	–	⏫	–	53.5	4.9	127	2+2	S	S	S	–

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/cars. When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score,** which factors in **road-test results, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction,** and **advanced safety,** which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning. A dash (–) means no such safety system is offered; O means that it's optional on at least some trim levels; S means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.

⏬ ↓ – ↑ ⏫ WORSE – BETTER | ✓ RECOMMENDED | GREEN CHOICE

◫ Miles-per-gallon equivalent (MPGe).

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Things Can Get Spooky in the Fall

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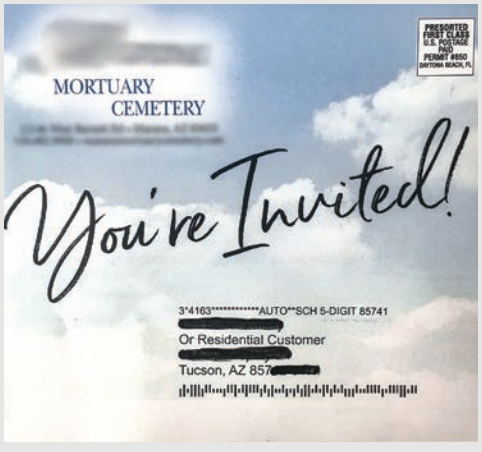
Who's Hosting This Cookout Anyway?
Maybe the food's out of this world … or not.
Submitted by Richard J. Seiler, Webster, NY

Now That's Long-Term Storage
We're guessing the monthly fees could really add up.
Submitted by Rick Evans, Bradford, VT



Easy RSVP: No Thanks!
We have grave concerns about joining this party.
Submitted by Thomas Richey, via email

Don't Let the Door Lock Behind You
Unless you're ready for your final house tour.
Submitted by Joe Rosol, Annapolis, MD

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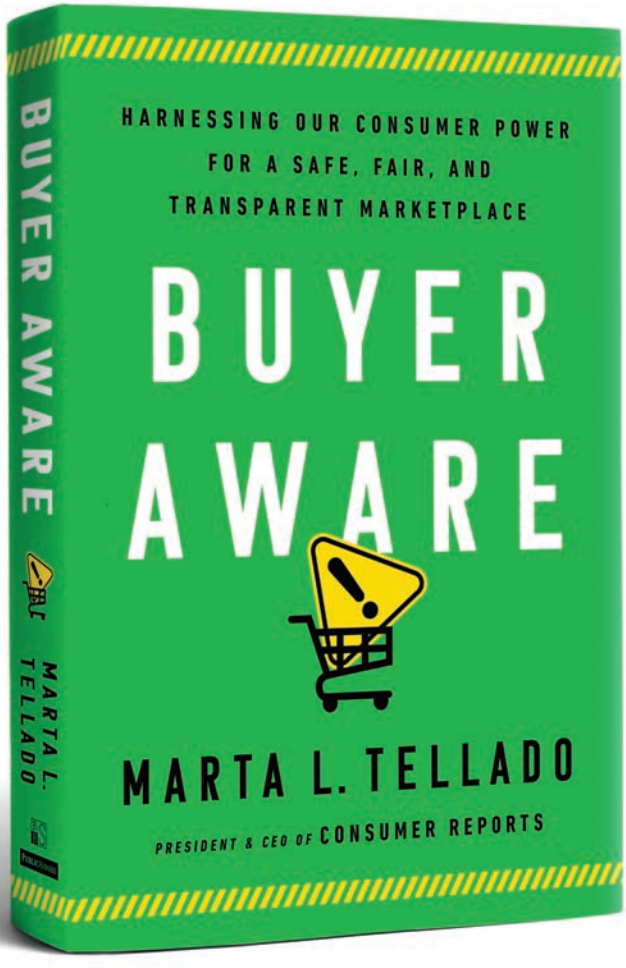
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Founder of Craigslist

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